DISJUNCTION DYSFUNCTION:

CITIZEN VS. POLICY PERSPECTIVES REGARDING SCHOOL GOALS

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Abstract

This study explored the tension between educational policy that narrows school goals and excludes citizen perspectives to the preferred goals and underlying values of Minnesota citizens. This study examined the shared values conferred between schools and their communities and the corresponding school goals. The following research questions were addressed in this study: 1) What do Minnesota citizens identify as the conferred values between schools and communities? 2) What goals do Minnesota citizens desire from their schools?

This study addressed the research questions and study purpose by engaging local citizens in a focused conversation about values and school purpose and goals. Participants in this study desired schools that produced comprehensive goals for individual students, their local communities, and society. Study participants described comprehensive goals that reflected deeply held community values including community sustainability, promoting future generational success, community connectedness, citizenship, service, and pride.

Participants described the disjunction between educational policy and citizen perspectives about values and school goals. Citizens described concerns about educational policy that narrowly defined school goals. Goals that specified only technical outcomes attained by individual students were also of concern. Finally, participants described issues with success being measured exclusively by short-term standardized achievement tests in math and reading. Including citizens in the process of identifying priority goals may result in educational policy that supports more comprehensive

outcomes. This study suggested that citizens desire and expect schools to emphasize comprehensive goals that reflect community values.

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Prologue

This paper reflected my aspiration to be a scholar-practitioner in pursuit of my personal and professional goals. I sought to bridge research and practice in a manner that benefited our collective work as educational leaders. School finance was a topic that piqued my interest, but I also desired to contribute more specifically to organizational leadership and continuous improvement. In my work as a school district administrator, I am routinely challenged to focus time and resources on the most important priorities and to strive for ambitious goals for all children. In my personal life, I desire to create a legacy of positive and improved outcomes for children and our community, a legacy my family will be proud of.

Minnesota was chosen as the setting for this research because of my affinity toward the state and belief in our historical commitment to education as a core distinctive competency. Minnesota has a legacy of excellent outcomes and financial support for public education going back to the Minnesota Miracle of the early 1970s. I was the benefactor of living in a rural, Minnesota community in that time period, and I attended an excellent public-school system. The Minnesota Miracle was conceived by the Citizens League, a Republican legislature, and a Democratic governor, Wendell Anderson (Minnesota Historical Society, 2007). The legacy of bi-partisan support for public education, a dedicated funding source, and increased financial support for public schools is the core of our current success as a state. Minnesota continues to rank among the best states on numerous essential childhood outcomes ranging from health to academic achievement.

The recent symbolic and operational shift from the Minnesota Miracle funding mechanisms and collaborative aspirations has jeopardized that legacy. There is less statewide consensus on educational policy and the legislature has routinely needed special sessions to find compromise on spending and policy bills. The gap between inflation-adjusted costs and the general education formula allowance has grown annually since 2003 (Association of Metropolitan School Districts, 2019). The state has collected less revenue than almost any time in the past 30 years when one considers revenue as a percent of personal income on a per-capita basis. (Minnesota Management and Budget, 2017).

Minnesota educational leaders operate in an increasingly more onerous and fragmented state policy environment. Numerous new state policies have been adopted setting additional expectations for plans and procedures related to student content knowledge and skills. Yet, these mandates do not reflect important local initiatives, such as the nationally recognized character program in my school district. In contrast, federal and state accountability systems and report cards almost exclusively measure success based on reading, math, and science achievement on a single standardized achievement test. These also are the outcomes that are frequently included in the economic analysis of whether states are adequately funding schools. Educational policy, particularly in school finance and accountability narrows school goals to finite technical outcomes.

This tension between local voices and policy-makers, coupled with the current policy and financial conditions in the state of Minnesota was something I was passionate about. I sought answers to questions about what goals Minnesotans want for

their schools, who gets to decide, what values are reflected in those goals, and does state policy support alignment with those goals. My doctoral committee helped me to focus on what Minnesotans want from their schools, but also to explore the values underlying those goals. I was persuaded by my committee, my work, and by the literature to go more deeply in filling a perceived gap in our understanding of school goals and the conferred values between schools and communities. I desired to understand the shared values in communities and the impact those values have on school goals. What follows is the manifestation of twelve years of learning and living the life of a scholar-practitioner who hopes to leave a legacy for future generations of Minnesota children.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Public education is at a critical juncture in the state of Minnesota. Public perception of nearly all societal institutions, including public education, has declined substantially over the past 40 years (Pew Research Center, 2016). Confidence in our government and its leaders is at or near historic lows (Raine, 2017; Turkle, 2017; Minnesota Department of Education, 2016). The 2018 Minnesota legislature ended without agreement on substantive educational finance and policy bills.

The Minnesota Supreme Court recently heard a case, *Cruz-Guzman v. State of Minnesota* (2018), where plaintiffs argued that the state was failing to meet its constitutional obligation to provide an adequate education. The Minnesota Supreme court ruled the case could proceed in district court based on the plaintiff's assertion the legislature was not providing equal educational opportunity. Plaintiffs argued that state policy has led to schools that are segregated by race and socio-economic status. They also contended that policy-makers and leaders failed to intervene despite evidence of the deleterious impact of segregation on academic achievement and graduation rates. Many citizens have lost faith that Minnesota's educational policies, finance system, and outcomes are meeting their desired values and goals.

Minnesota has a historically sound and legally affirmed school finance system (*Skeen v. State of Minnesota, 1993*). Nevertheless, recent studies and advocacy groups have claimed that Minnesota's current school finance system has led to a funding shortfall for many school districts in the state (Association of Metropolitan School Districts, 2018; Parents United for Public Schools, 2015; Silverstein, Rose, & Myers, 2006). Available resources have not kept pace with inflation and are tied to new policy

mandates that reduce flexibility and the ability to sustain existing programs. This reduction and narrowing have limited local school leadership's ability to meet local needs that go beyond the scope of state and federal policy. Changes to state budget forecasting resulting in projections that account for inflation in the revenue projections, but not in the expenditures, also has misled policy-makers and the public regarding budget realities that schools face (Association of Metropolitan School Districts, 2014a). Those projections do not account for inflationary or contractually obligated salary and benefit increases. They also do not account for the comprehensive goals that communities expect from their schools.

School districts have sought additional operating levies to cover basic costs like providing special education services (Association of Metropolitan School Districts, 2016). Historically those operating levies were characterized as “excess cost levies” and were regarded as revenue for local priorities rather than necessary to maintain basic operations and to respond to state mandates. More recently, leaders of school districts have embarked on private fundraising campaigns including establishing foundations to sustain and enhance programs desired by the school community (Minneapolis Foundation, 2018; Orono Foundation, 2017). These examples illustrate how operating levies, which once were able to fund local priorities, are now being used to fund basic costs. School districts are seeking other revenue sources, like local education foundations, to meet the comprehensive goals sought by local citizens (Orono Foundation, 2018).

I would postulate that in this context, educational leaders must listen and be open to public ideals regarding the value education provides and what values education

derives from citizens. Policy-makers must allow local leaders and citizens to have a voice and the flexibility to enact processes that align with values and school goals. I believe that if we bring the voice of citizens and local educational leaders into the policy-making process, the result will be an emphasis on comprehensive goals that are aligned with community values. This would include the conferred values that are shared and guide decisions about goals and resources across schools and their communities. Those goals include an array of academic, intellectual, personal, social-emotional, physical, and citizenship outcomes. Congruent school finance, accountability, and policy mandates should emanate from those goals.

This study explores if there is a disjunction between local versus centralized control of educational outcomes. This study examines potential differences when one adds the perspective of local citizens. Local control of educational process and outcomes has been a hallmark of Minnesota education, reinforced by a governance model that includes 327 independence school districts (Minnesota Department of Education, 2019). The current educational policy-making process has deemphasized local control and this study will describe and compare the preferences of citizens to those reinforced by policy, particularly in school finance and accountability.

Mitchell and Mitchell described four distinct economic goods that are conveyed by schools (Table 1). Goals range from private goods benefitting children and adults in the educational system to public goods. Schools serve multiple ends including educating children, providing childcare, offering occupational opportunities, and passing on cultural legacy. Cultural development is consistent with the development of democratic principles and technical goals support community desires to improve economic

competitiveness. Public goods provided by schools are particularly difficult to measure in terms of system outcomes and assigned costs. These ends are desired by communities as an integral aspect of what schools provide to individuals and groups. In contrast, current policy narrowly defines school goals, primarily reinforcing technical goals accrued by individual students (Mitchell & Mitchell, 2003). Those goals are primarily in the realm of mathematics and reading achievement measured by standardized tests.

Table 1

A Framework for Analyzing the Political Economy of Class Size Reduction

	What Aims for Education?	
Who Benefits?	*Education as Technical: Training in Skills of Practical Value Having Economic Value*	*Education as Cultural: Awakening of Identity and Character Having Political Value*
A private good: Distributed results accruing to individuals as education is being obtained	**Durable product:** Durable skills and knowledge with workplace value that persists over time (lasting benefits)	**Direct service:** Safe, nurturing, sensitive, caring child rearing and decent working conditions for teachers
A public good: Cumulative benefits for everyone; expected to accrue interest over time	**Human capital investment:** System capacity building with some risk of not being realized by enough individuals to be worth cost	**Cultural legacy:** Establishment of civic value that determines status and may lead or lag society

Source: Mitchell & Mitchell, 2003

Educational policy often does not account for the comprehensive, visionary purposes sought by communities. As a school district administrator, I am frequently challenged to prioritize my time and resources, working to accomplish school district goals while attending to an array of individual needs, community desires, and state policy directives. Recently, those challenges have felt more daunting because of recently enacted policy at the state and federal level, including new accountability and

assessment requirements, curricular improvements, record keeping systems, and teacher and principal evaluation mandates.

In many cases, those requirements are seemingly misaligned with community priorities and what parents and students in our community want. One particular areas is valuing schools where adults care about children and children are connected to school (Griffith, 2000). Sometimes effective practices meet multiple ends, such as teachers developing strong relationships with students (Hattie, 2009). Strong student-teacher relationships impact technical goals ranging from academic outcomes to social-emotional learning to cultural and civic goals that are more culturally oriented. In other cases, these competing needs require very different resources, priorities, and implementation processes.

Comprehensive Goals and Community Values

American citizens have consistently desired that schools seek comprehensive goals across academic, personal, and social-emotional domains (Rothstein, Jacobsen, & Wilder, 2008). Jacobson and Rothstein (2015) found that contemporary education policy stresses a narrow definition of accountability that focuses on technical skills while citizens have defined school goals more expansively. This narrowing is particularly evident in the way success is defined and measured (Rothstein & Jacobsen, 2006) and in the way policy-makers and courts determine if schools are adequately funded (Kirst & Rhodes, 2010). School goals are primarily measured through technical outcomes attained by individual students, rather than the more comprehensive goals sought by communities and society (Mitchell & Mitchell, 2003). Those goals positively impact civic processes such as engagement in political activities, participating in social

movements, relationship building, volunteering and public service, and voting (Glaeser, Ponzetta, & Schleifer, 2007).

In this thesis, I intend to describe the comprehensive goals citizens desire for their schools and how these expectations compare to historical perspectives about what is valued in public education. I will use the Mitchell and Mitchell, (2003) framework to illustrate the varied political economic goods inherent in education. I will describe how the educational policy-making process, state and federal accountability systems, and the manner and level in which state resources are allocated impede local efforts to meet comprehensive school-community goals. Those processes narrowly focus on technical goods, favoring reading and mathematics achievement outcomes for individual students. I will describe how the current policy-making process favors technical outcomes benefitting individuals and discounts other educational goals. I propose that gathering citizen perspectives about their community values and school goals can illustrate more comprehensive educational aims. The central problem addressed in this paper is this contrast between comprehensive community goals and current narrowing of educational goals and processes.

Study Purpose

The purpose of this study is to describe what Minnesotans want from their schools and to illustrate whether those goals encompass the public and private goods espoused by Mitchell and Mitchell, (2003) and historical definitions described by Rothstein, Jacobsen, and Wilder, (2008). This study will seek to understand and explain citizen values and the educational goals emanating from those values. Various regions of the state of Minnesota are represented and differences and similarities are explored.

Ultimately, this study seeks to describe the educational goals desired by Minnesota citizens. This analysis also intends to compare what citizens want compared to those prioritized in current educational finance models, accountability mechanisms, and overall education policy.

This inquiry is grounded in the voices of local citizens and their perceptions of school goals. This is an important contribution because local citizens have often not been included in the inner circle of educational policy development (Marshall, Mitchell, & Wirt, 1986). Policy alternatives are shaped by insiders at the state level including individual legislators connected to educational policy and less so by citizens at the local level. Coalitions of insiders with common political orientations drive policy issues and alternatives (Wolbrecht & Hartney, 2014). Even when citizen engagement is required by Minnesota state statute, state policy-makers often narrow definitions of goals to prescribed constructs (Minnesota Statute 120B.11). These conditions warrant more explicit engagement with citizens representing their local communities.

This paper contributes to research in education policy by questioning the efficacy of narrow goals if citizens continue to expect attainment of comprehensive outcomes. This study seeks to examine if citizens desire educational outputs that span private and public goods, across technical and cultural spheres. Additionally, this paper brings citizen voices into the policy-making process in a unique way. Implications of the breadth of purported goals on accountability and school finance will be discussed, and recommendations will be made. Regional comparisons across the state of Minnesota will be explored. Similarities and differences will be noted between this study and historical definitions of goals described by Rothstein, Jacobsen, and Wilder,

(2008) and Mitchell and Mitchell's (2003) definition of education as a multi-faceted economic good.

Research Questions

The following research questions will be addressed by this study. 1) What do Minnesota citizens identify as the conferred values between schools and communities? 2) What goals do Minnesota citizens desire from their schools? Conferred values are the fundamental, underlying beliefs and priorities that are shared between communities and schools. These questions are important because declining confidence and trust in public education can be ameliorated by closer alignment between community values and school goals. Further, by understanding what citizens want from their schools, leaders have a lens to enact policies that produce public and private outcomes aligned with those principles. Answers to these questions also support educational policy, particularly in accountability and school finance, that is congruent with the values and goals communities want for their schools.

Organization of Thesis

This thesis is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 describes challenges that Minnesota schools are facing, including the lack of trust in public institutions, new mandates and financial limitations. Chapter 1 introduces the concept of comprehensive goals and how current school finance, accountability, and overall educational policy has narrowed those goals. Chapter 1 introduces the distinction between public and private goods described by Mitchell and Mitchell (2003) and how education is a multi-faceted good. Additionally, chapter 1 describes how citizen perspectives can contribute to alignment between community values and school processes and outcomes.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature that can help us to understand how scholars have described school goals and how they are impacted by finance, accountability, and educational policy. It summarizes the research on the political processes impacting education, how success is defined and measured, and how resource adequacy is determined. As part of that discussion, it reviews the literature on citizen engagement practices and assesses the scholarship on the appropriate methods employed to capture that construct. Further, it discusses how engaging citizens might contribute to understanding the relationship between public value and educational goals.

Chapter 3 describes the research methodology used to address the research about conferred values between schools and communities and school goals. It comprises a discussion of the research methodology, including the study design, selection of participants, setting, data collection procedures, and data analysis. Limitations are noted specific to this study and to the general methodologies. This chapter describes why a focus group methodology and qualitative analysis are effective techniques to answer research questions about citizen perspectives regarding school goals. Chapter 3 connects the literature on citizen engagement and school goals, values, and policy problems to a study design seeking citizen reflections about their communities and what they want from their schools.

Chapter 4 describes the results of this study across four key results evident in the thematic coding of citizen perspectives. Those key results include: 1) Conferred values between schools and their communities were strong and connected to desired goals, 2) Citizens desired comprehensive school goals, 3) Citizens described desired goals that benefitted students, their communities, and broader society, 4) Individual student goals

were the most frequently described goals. Individual student goals included academic, social-emotional, and character traits. Chapter 4 includes summaries and relevant quotes about those key findings. Themes describing what goals citizens want from their schools are an essential part of this chapter.

Chapter 5 summarizes the study from purpose to process and implications for research, policy, and practice. The chapter specifically describes the purpose and challenges of the study, reviews the key findings, and discusses implications. Those implications span educational policy, school finance, and accountability as well as practical applications for school and community leaders. Chapter 5 includes a description of those themes in relation to the Mitchell and Mitchell (2003) framework about schools being both a public and private good serving technical and cultural aims. This chapter recognizes the contributions to understanding school purpose and goals as an extension of the Rothstein, Jacobsen, and Wilder, (2008) framework. The chapter concludes with suggestions for future research.

Key Terms

Adequacy. The threshold of educational resources necessary to provide sufficient resources to meet a performance standard (Downes & Stiefel, 2015).

Citizen engagement. Including members of the public in active deliberation about the ends that governments should pursue and how current programs are meeting needs (Box, 1998).

Conferred values. Fundamental, underlying beliefs and priorities that are shared between communities and schools.

Private Good. An economic good that is exemplified by individual gains or benefits. Educational examples include durable products such as student knowledge and employability and direct services such as provision of childcare for children and employment for adults (Mitchell & Mitchell, 2003).

Public Good. An economic good that is exemplified by cumulative benefits for a group that accrues interest over time. Educational examples include human capital investment in generations of children and cultural legacy including passing on civic values (Mitchell & Mitchell, 2003).

Public Value. A collective articulation of social benefits defined through a process of legitimization and support of shared outcomes (Moore & Khagram, 2004).

Standards-based accountability. A centralized form of school reform expecting that all students meet common standards in core academic content areas (Adams, 2010).

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

Chapter 2 describes the contrast between comprehensive perspectives about school goals and current educational policy. This chapter describes a policy environment that may be inconsistent with the expectations and desired outcomes that communities want for their schools. Rothstein, Jacobsen, and Wilder, (2008) provided foundational grounding about the comprehensive nature of the historical definitions of school goals. Mitchell and Mitchell, (2003) further characterized the expansive nature of school goals by defining education as both a public and private good leading to cultural and technical outputs.

Literature about school goals highlights the connection to conferred values between schools and communities and the potential benefits derived from effective citizen engagement processes and values alignment. Descriptions of how school goals are impacted by accountability models and school finance follow the general discussion. Chapter 2 also describes research-based processes aligned with effective citizen engagement. This discussion provides a basis for the importance of effective citizen engagement around community values and school goals. The following review of the literature illustrates how the current policy environment favors narrow goals focused on technical outcomes.

Political Values and Culture

One of the primary challenges to local leaders pursuing comprehensive goals comprising both public and private goods is the current policy-making environment and the context of political values and culture. The ability of local schools to pursue comprehensive goals desired by their community is impeded by incongruence between

political values and culture at the various levels of policy development and enactment. A state's political environment and the prevailing political culture dramatically shape the development of educational policy (Lawton, 2012). Educational policy is also influenced by paradigms that validate policies congruent with broader societal themes (Mehta, 2013). Mitchell and Mitchell (2003) described how using a "political economy perspective" allows one to see the differing values that underlie policy development. "These divergent interests and values not only lead policymakers, professional educators, parents, and community members to misunderstand each other, but also to find each other's policy proposals to be irrelevant or even repugnant to basic values" (p. 147).

Communication, alignment, and enactment of school goals should consider that political cultures are complex and varied within communities (Fowler, 2004). Educational leaders must understand and adapt school goals to fit political culture, a collective way of thinking that generally defines expectations for the political process, goals, and structures (Fowler, 2004). Two broad values distinctions are economic values, including efficiency, quality, and economic growth and democratic values, including fraternity, equality, and liberty (Fowler). Varying political values are consistent with the varying purposes of education in the United States, reflecting perceptions of both public and private goods (Mitchell & Mitchell, 2003). Different political cultures privilege different policy orientations, often broadly prioritizing choice, quality, efficiency, and/or equity (Heck, 2004). Guthrie and Wong (2015) identified equality, efficiency, and liberty as conflicting values within educational policy.

While these general political values may underlie state policy decisions, they may not reflect the values of local communities, which may impede local schools from pursuing divergent goals. Firestone (1989) hypothesized that "if one tried to take advantage of the messiness of the educational policy system rather than cleaning it up, constructive, creative approaches might be developed locally" (p. 23). That messiness may be best served by processes that acknowledge variability in perspectives across local citizenries about school priorities and goals. In general, recent educational policy has favored technical outcomes achieved by individual students rather than supporting creative, local approaches (NCLB, 2002; Minnesota Department of Education, 2018).

School Goals

U.S. schools have historically served multiple purposes, emphasizing varied outcomes depending upon the community as well as student values and needs. Rothstein, Jacobsen, and Wilder, (2008) examined the historical, professional, and legal definitions of the goals of education in the United States going back to colonial times. Rothstein, Jacobsen, and Wilder identified eight broad categories of school outcomes that have spanned eras and leaders: (1) basic academic knowledge and skills, (2) critical thinking, (3) appreciation of the arts and literature, (4) preparation for skilled employment, (5) social skills and work ethic, (6) citizenship, (7) physical health, and (8) emotional health. More contemporary definitions of the purpose of education include specific skills needed to succeed in a technologically complex, global society. The Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2011) describes that students must possess learning and innovation skills, and information, media, and technology skills beyond core academic skills.

School goals reflect general societal benefits, including improving standards of living and providing a foundation for democracy and citizenship. Jacobsen and Rothstein (2015) described that schools benefit society by instilling democratic values. Jacobsen and Rothstein described school goals that enhanced standards of living, such as appreciating the arts and leisure, and attributes such as persistence and self-reliance. Early American leaders John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson supported education as a method to develop democracy and moral citizens (Viteritti, 2004). Wraga (2001) asserted that in addition to content-based educational skills, schools reinforce morals, ethics, and democratic principles.

A broader characterization of these technical and cultural outputs considers education as a public and private good. Mitchell and Mitchell, (2003) described education as balancing the characteristics of both a private and public good, including individual and collective benefits. In addition, regardless of who reaps the benefits, the purpose of education is to produce both technical and cultural outputs. Cultural development is consistent with the development of democratic principles, and technical goals support community desires to improve economic competitiveness. These broad descriptors (i.e., public v. private; technical v. cultural) are consistent with the eight categories described by Rothstein, Jacobsen, and Wilder, (2008). The Rothstein, Jacobsen, and Wilder framework differs from Mitchell and Mitchell in its emphasis on goals emphasizing student outcomes. The Mitchell and Mitchell framework includes concepts such as cultural legacy that are a good produced by schools that are cumulative benefits accrued by the public.

Ntiri (2001) added to the discourse by noting that education may be viewed as a path to upward social mobility, personal development, and success, which the author asserts are essential to democracy and overall economic growth. Belfield and Levin, (2002) postulated that school goals are often varied and vague, including constructs ranging from citizenship, socialization, college readiness, and standardized achievement test performance.

Another example of the varied purpose of schooling is teaching social-emotional skills and school connectedness. Social-emotional learning, including skills like self-management, self-awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making are critical to success in the workplace and citizenship (Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2009) defined school connectedness as the belief by students that adults and peers in the school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals. Resnick et al. (1997) found that student connectedness to school was positively associated with academic improvement and reductions in risk-taking behaviors and social-emotional problems. A limitation of the study is that the interview data did not illustrate the specific school conditions leading to greater connectedness. School connectedness was a construct illustrating the cultural goods ascribed to schools.

Want and Holcombe (2010) provided an important addition to the understanding of school connectedness. They found that students' perceptions of school environment influenced their academic achievement directly and indirectly through its impact on school engagement. School connectedness is enhanced by peer relationships, and increased levels of connectedness to peers are associated with higher levels of

educational attainment and post-secondary persistence (Babcock, 2008). Evidence suggests that teacher job satisfaction is improved when school climate, connectedness, and engagement are high (Brown, 2001). School connectedness is an example of a construct less focused on technical skills and a purpose that is part of the varied and vague nature of school purpose and goals described by Belfield and Levin (2002).

In contrast to broad and varied school purposes, the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) emphasized narrow mathematics and reading achievement goals. Minnesota's plan to align with the new federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) adds additional analyses but continues to reinforce narrow academic outcomes (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018). Since the inception of NCLB, there have been small gains in mathematics achievement but little or no achievement gains or focus on other content areas (Dee & Jacob, 2011). The drive to focus the educational process on standards-based accountability, measured by standardized achievement tests has been an overarching state and federal policy strategy. This creates disincentives for schools to make long-term commitments to comprehensive strategies and goals (Rothstein, Jacobsen, & Wilder, 2008).

This is also a reality of my work as a teaching and learning director. Rather than support attainment of comprehensive goals, my work has become increasingly about compliance with regulatory state-policy, additional mandates, and broad policy packages such as the state waiver to NCLB. In conversations with colleagues and citizens, there is frustration with the lack of cohesiveness of state policy and the inability of local school leaders and citizens to have a voice in influencing state and federal educational policy and processes.

Since 2013, state policymakers have instituted an array of additional mandates, primarily in the area of technical goals at the student level. In Minnesota, these include ACT testing for all students, creation of a World's Best Workforce Plan, mandated alignment with the Common Core Standards, and alignment of courses with the Minnesota Common Course Catalogue. Perhaps most substantial, new requirements for school districts to provide all-day kindergarten for all students and an effort by the governor to mandate preschool. This policy proposal was abandoned at the end of the 2015 legislative session due in part to local opposition to another prescriptive, state mandated program (Bakst & Potter, 2015).

In Minnesota, independent local school districts offer a structure that supports local definitions of public value, purpose, and goals. State finance and policy mechanisms have inhibited local flexibility to fund and design educational inputs and processes. Contributing factors include limited funding increases and prescriptive expectations for how funds are used. The two largest school district advocacy organizations, the Minnesota Rural Education Association (MREA) and the Association of Metropolitan School Districts (AMSD), have recently prioritized local control as one of their primary legislative planks (Association of Metropolitan School Districts, 2014b; Minnesota Rural Education Association, 2014). Wagner (1995) asked a fundamental question about the purpose of education and who gets to decide, arguing that there was no true national consensus and that “meaningful local goals that are broadly supported will create a rich diversity of high-quality schools” (p. 393).

Citizen Engagement

Definitions of school goals, measures of success, and resource allocation decisions are often not inclusive of citizen perspectives and may not be aligned to community and school values. Local citizens have been on the outside of the educational policy-making inner circle (Marshall, Mitchell, & Wirt, 1986) and trends in American education are shifting even more power to centralized authority (DeBoer, 2012). Minnesota's history of engaging citizens through local school boards and commissions that influence state policy is incongruent with this trend (Mazzoni, 1991).

The actors involved in educational policy have an impact on school goals and the values that are reinforced. Policy development is most impacted by insiders at the state level including individual legislators connected to educational policy and less so by individuals at the local level, including non-elected citizens (Marshall, Mitchell, & Wirt, 1986). While the power of various actors differs across states, individual legislators leading education committees and the legislature in general wield the most influence over educational policy. Others with the most influence over educational policy include the Chief State School Officer, interest groups including business and teacher unions. Those interest groups closest to the inner circle were more likely to have their values and beliefs reflected in enacted policy. Local citizens may not understand or have influence over these processes in meaningful ways, rendering less influence over the impact of policy on school goals.

Contemporary citizen engagement includes a desire to return to more traditional values, including local control of the governing process (Box, 1998). Meaningful citizen engagement has the potential to help connect resource allocation to community values

(Marlowe & Portillo, 2006), support more effective and efficient organizational performance (Neshkova & Guo, 2011), and reengage citizenry in the democratic process (Kittilson & Schwindt-Bayer, 2010). The current challenges facing schools are complex and require solutions that extend beyond the perspective of educators and policy-makers.

Engaging local citizen perspectives is critical to developing a deeper understanding of priorities and their alignment between values, goals and policy. Neshkova and Guo (2011) found that state transportation agencies that engaged citizens around priorities, including budgetary priorities, were more effective and efficient in meeting performance goals. Further, those agencies that enlisted citizens more effectively had a better understanding of contextual factors affecting policy decisions. Citizen engagement served the purpose of promoting democratic participation in the policy-making process, serving as a model for democratic purposes embedded in public education (Kittelson & Schwindt-Bayer, 2010; Neshkova & Guo, 2011). Effective citizen engagement served as a catalyst to understand, integrate, and prioritize community values in the budgeting process (Marlowe & Portillo, 2006). Citizen engagement has the potential to help policy-makers deepen perspective on the public values and how they shape school goals and simultaneously re-engage communities in democratic processes.

Glasser, Yeager, and Parker (2006) argued that citizens expect engagement that mirrors values of the past emphasizing local control, increased involvement in strategic agendas, and deemphasize professional control of decisions and resources. Increased involvement in setting priorities, oversight of the process, questioning outcomes, and

debating implications were more prominent citizen beliefs (Bloor, 2002). Group processes centered on a desired future and novelty in resource prioritization and procurement are aligned with Bloor's idea of the beliefs underlying effective citizen engagement.

Studies that have sought to engage citizens and parents around educational outcomes are often conducted using survey and focus group methods. In one of the early surveys of public opinion on educational outcomes, Downey (as cited in Rothstein, Jacobsen, & Wilder, 2008) asked citizens and educational leaders to prioritize 16 pre-identified educational goals. Results showed comparable results across both groups and balance between intellectual and social-emotional skills. Despite some shifting in policy toward comprehensive goals, federal and state educational policy largely reinforced narrow, technical goals, focused on mathematics and reading achievement. Jacobsen and Rothstein (2015) conducted surveys of citizens that indicated that they perceived that too much emphasis has been placed on reading and mathematics tests at the expense of a balanced set of educational goals. These goals have primarily reinforced education as a technical, private good as described by Mitchell and Mitchell (2003).

The Kettering Foundation/Public Agenda conducted a series of focus groups and surveys engaging parents from across the United States about school accountability (Johnson, 2013). Johnson found that citizens wanted American schools to raise standards and outcomes for students, but that standardized testing was over-emphasized, which distorted student learning. The study noted that parents saw accountability as extending beyond the school day and that parents needed to be held accountable for

reinforcing success, persistence, and hard work. In an earlier survey, Public Agenda found that parents wanted greater emphasis on fine arts, civics, and teamwork (Johnson, Rochkind, & Ott, 2010). Most parents in that study desired that their own children take advanced level mathematics and science courses (60% and 54% respectively) in high school, but 90% of parents thought those courses would be useful for any student regardless of career path.

A 2013 survey by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute asked parents about their educational goals and the attributes they sought in schools (Zeehandelaar & Winkler, 2013). The survey of 2,000 parents was representative of ethnic, socio-economic, and political backgrounds in the United States. Regardless of regional or demographic characteristics, common goals across parent respondents included a desire for a strong core curriculum in reading, mathematics and science as well as integrating technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) in a single discipline. Parents wanted their child to develop effective study habits, critical thinking skills, and the ability to communicate in writing or orally. The most common goals identified were education and job skills (36%), an emphasis on citizenship and democracy (24%), a focus on higher test scores (23%), an environment that promoted diversity (22%), an emphasis on the arts (15%), and a focus on admittance into top-tier colleges (12%). This study affirms citizen preference for comprehensive and varied school goals, extending beyond technical goods accruing to individuals.

Rothstein, Jacobson, and Wilder (2008) set out to examine how citizens, school board members, and legislators would prioritize school outcomes across eight broad goal areas. The survey required them to "weight" each broad goal area by assigning

percentages to each area resulting in all areas comprising 100%. The average weight applied by citizens to each area are as follows: basic academic skills in core subjects (19%), critical thinking and problem solving (15%), social skills and work ethic (14%), physical health (12%), emotional health (11%), preparation for skilled work (11%), citizenship and community responsibility (10%), and the arts and literature (8%). Results affirmed past studies of citizen preference for balanced educational goals. Rothstein, Jacobsen, and Wilder hypothesized that current standards-based accountability and testing models created barriers to achieving the balanced goals desired by the public.

The researcher has participated in efforts to engage local citizens and in a statewide effort with the Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA), experiencing challenges and success In the spring of 2014, the Minnesota Association of School Administrators facilitated a series of regional meetings about the future of education in the state of Minnesota called Minnevate! (MASA, 2014). Although the Minnevate! sessions were intended to bring various stakeholders together, they were almost exclusively attended by school leaders with very few representatives from other citizenries. Minnevate! findings reinforced the need to reexamine goals in the context of thinking about the future rather than reinforcing the policies and outcomes of the past. The Minnevate! experience highlighted the challenges of engaging citizens including assuring that citizen voices were heard, caution about making inferences from limited data, and the need to persist in engagement efforts.

State statute prescribes that school districts create a "World's Best Workforce Plan" with input from community stakeholders (Minnesota Statute 120B.11., 2014).

Contrasting this opportunity for community development of school goals, the goal areas are prescribed and fall only in the realm of technical aims benefiting individuals. As part of a new school district leadership team, the researcher sought community feedback about goals, aspirations, needs, and issues through small-group community feedback sessions. Leadership learned about perceptions of strengths and needs and ideas about next steps and community priorities. Leadership continued to engage citizens and parents informally and formally through surveys and meetings. Those early meetings helped practitioners to understand deep aspects of the school-community culture and provided a foundation for subsequent work. The process I engaged in as a school district leader contrasted with statutory requirements by allowing our community latitude in identifying school expectations that spanned technical and cultural outputs across stakeholders.

Current educational policy is incongruent with models that engage citizens in exploring and enacting processes that align school goals with citizen and community preferences. The following sections describe how current accountability models, how we define and measure success, and school finance analyses reinforce technical outputs. The literature reviewed in these sections also illustrates the problem of narrow goals, established by state and federal policy-makers.

Defining and Measuring Success

How one defines and measures success is crucial to the educational process. State and federal policy emphasizes standardized achievement tests in mathematics, reading, and science. These measurements of educational outputs reinforce a narrow definition of the purpose of education. Narrow measures of success reinforce individual,

technical outputs, measuring success through course attainment and academic achievement on standardized tests (e.g., Alexander, 2003; Guthrie & Rothstein, 1999; Kirst & Rhodes, 2010). Additionally, local citizens and leaders are often excluded from this process, undermining their ability to define success based on community preference and more comprehensive goals for their students. Current federal and state policy narrows how success is defined and measured, serving as a barrier to pursuing comprehensive goals.

In my experience, over-emphasis on technical skills measured by standardized achievement tests comes at the expense of other skills and content areas. Teachers feel pressure to deliver results on federal and state accountability tests that are designed to measure grade level content proficiency. Those tests deemphasize other outcomes and content areas and promote teaching behaviors specific to test outcomes (Jacob, 2005; Koretz, 2015; Looney, 2009). It is challenging to help teachers understand and believe that broader strategies such as teaching students number sense or drawing inferences from literature will result in discrete gains on content tests. While recognizing the social-emotional factors impacting children, schools are also driven to intervene with academic content and skills as a priority over social-emotional and non-cognitive skills. These examples also illustrate how standardized achievement tests promote short versus long-term thinking with teachers and principals.

Additional curricular impacts of standards-based accountability noted by scholars include narrowing of the curriculum, removal of enrichment courses, provision of an inauthentic curriculum that leads to student apathy, loss of valued aesthetic experiences in the arts, and more test preparation that does not lead to general

knowledge and skill development (Dee & Jacob, 2011; Murnane & Papay, 2010; Thompson & Allen, 2012). The researcher works in a school district with a nationally recognized character education program where relationships and school connectedness are valued and are part of the organizational objectives. Even with that emphasis, organizational definitions of success include standardized measures of achievement and growth. Leadership struggles to balance how to define success employing status and growth measures comparing schools longitudinally and to local and international benchmarks.

The prominence and efficacy of standardized testing in school accountability is being challenged on several fronts (Gewertz, 2014; Layton, 2014). The reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (2001) as the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) and proliferation of state waivers under the U.S. Department of Education's Race to the Top campaign have brought questions about standardized testing programs back into the policy arena. The NCLB Act, through its focused, high stakes mathematics and reading assessments, reduced the emphasis on other curricular areas including history, arts, civics, geography, and foreign language (Rothstein & Jacobsen, 2006). The recently authorized Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) does little to change the emphasis on high stakes reading and mathematics assessments, keeping those requirements comparable to NCLB (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018). Opposition to the increasing demands those tests are placing on teachers and students is mounting (Harris & Fessenden, 2015; Matos, 2015).

Specific questions about the efficacy of standardized testing have arisen in the context of lagging international performance of U.S. students over the period of

enactment of NCLB (Darling-Hammond, 2014). Even where results have improved on state NCLB tests, other measures of student achievement such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results have been mixed. National results showed gains in mathematics performance at 4th grade, but small to no gains in reading achievement and 8th grade mathematics (Dee & Jacob, 2011). Figlio and Ladd (2015) hypothesized that standardized achievement tests may not have improved learning and may be less effective in improving learning versus other accountability mechanisms such as inspection and supervision. Critics have also asserted that measuring technical skills conveyed at the individual level are not the only outcomes sought by schools.

The following examples illustrate alternatives to standards-based accountability that transcend technical skills attained by students. Adequacy and equality of outcomes can be measured by examining attainment of equal freedoms, opportunities, rights, and basic economic opportunities (Satz, 2007). Gordon (1995) noted that a system that effectively measures educational outcomes across diverse populations would utilize more authentic, performance-based, and contextual processes rather than the current reliance on standardized achievement tests.

Assessment processes should include classroom formative and diagnostic assessments that provide important outcome data that can be used to adapt instructional practices and evaluate system outputs (Kirst & Rhodes, 2010). Darling-Hammond et al. (2016), described accountability models going beyond mastery of core academic content to include critical thinking, collaboration skills, academic mindsets, communication skills, and independence. Process measures including formative assessments, access to rigorous curricula, student engagement, and social-emotional

learning were described as measures in this paradigm. Recent policy and scholarly contributions suggest that broadening educational goals may be gaining traction, even within the context of federal ESSA mandates.

School finance models and analyses compound the impact of narrow, technical definitions of school goals. Like measures of success, resource allocation is also impacted by federal and state mandated standardized achievement tests that do not account for comprehensive educational goals. The analysis of resource adequacy also privileges state definitions of school goals that do not always reflect the perspectives of local citizens. The following section addresses resource adequacy further and expands upon other ways that resource scarcity creates challenges for school leaders in meeting comprehensive goals.

Determining and Allocating Adequate Resources

Having sufficient resources and the flexibility to use those resources to meet school goals is integral to attaining desired outcomes. School funding and the analysis of adequate resources have emphasized narrow, technical outputs over comprehensive perspectives about school goals. When goals have included cultural outputs such as citizenship, they have excluded local citizen perspectives. Educational adequacy is the term commonly used in school finance literature to define whether adequate resources are being allocated for the educational processes to attain the outcomes expected of schools. Scholars in the field have applied a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods to examine questions of sufficiency in attaining desired outcomes. Legal decisions are based on state constitutional standards establishing education as a state responsibility with much of the constitutional language mirroring Minnesota's standard

to fund a "uniform, thorough, and efficient" system of public schools (Minn. Const. art. XIII, sec. 1).

Rather than reinforcing community values about comprehensive goals, economic theory is prominent in the methods used to evaluate resource adequacy related to school goals. Educational adequacy is predominantly defined by economic analysis answering questions about the relationships between inputs, processes, and outputs (Alexander, 2004; Berne & Stiefel, 1999; Odden, 2000). The five generally accepted models for determining the adequacy of education funding are the standard educational cost, cost-function, professional judgment, successful schools, and evidence-based models (Alexander & Kim, 2017; Hanushek, 2006; Odden, Goetz, & Picus, 2010; Odden & Picus, 2000).

Current models for determining if states adequately fund schools do not emphasize public values including cultural legacy; instead, they focus on individual student benefits. Monk (1989) described this as an educational production function, describing the nature of the relationships between a combination of inputs and the outputs that relationship yields. Ideally, one could find strong and predictable relationships between educational inputs, processes, and outputs, yet Monk found that only small to moderate relationships were evident. Regardless, applying this approach to producing cultural legacy or human capital investment, which are part of the Mitchell and Mitchell (2003) framework, would be challenging.

In the context of standards-based accountability, outcomes are defined by system performance goals as measured by standardized achievement tests. The analysis of educational adequacy illustrates the interplay of educational policy, measures of

success, and resource sufficiency. The most prominent analysis of educational adequacy is to use existing state statute and model the cost of inputs to attain statutorily defined achievement outcomes (Chambers, 1999; Clune, 1994; Odden & Picus, 2000). Frequently, those achievement outcomes are defined by student performance on standardized tests (Kirst & Rhodes, 2010). Even when the outcomes are defined by something other than standardized achievement tests, they rarely include the context of local communities, their values, and intended goals.

Reschovsky and Imazeki (2001) noted that most states do not base educational finance decisions on tight linkages between resources and student achievement. Education finance policy routinely excludes alignment between goals and resource allocation. Rather, policy goals are pursued in the context of available resources and the political environment (Augenblick, Myers, & Anderson, 1997). Available resources and economic conditions are a substantial driver of revenue allocations for public education (Alexander, 1997). Educational finance policy is also impacted by a desire for individual legislators to reduce negative impacts on the school districts they represent (Baker, 2006). Evidence of individual legislator impacts are seen in states where base costs have been elevated and weighting deflated to increase the number of "winners" on the formula changes, particularly those represented by powerful legislators. In those cases, educational policies are not developed in a context that supports tight linkages of inputs to desired goals.

The goals of American schools vary in school finance literature and judicial decisions identifying what constitutes an adequate education, but they primarily focus on technical skills (Koski & Hahnel, 2015; Springer, Houck, & Guthrie, 2015). Court

cases evaluate if state finance systems meet standards for providing educational processes and outcomes guaranteed in state constitutions. One of the seminal court cases defining educational adequacy was *Rose v. Council for Better Education (1989).* In this case, Kentucky's educational finance system was declared unconstitutional because it was not providing an adequate system, including preparing students for citizenship and the labor market (Burbridge, 2008). The ruling was followed by a mandate to define student capabilities that would result from an adequate education (Ryan & Saunders, 2004). These definitions are integral to decisions about school goals, which vary across states, but frequently include only technical goals achieved by individual students.

Minnesota's last adjudicated finance adequacy case, *Skeen v. State of Minnesota, 1993,* did not determine that funding was insufficient to meet the state's constitutional obligation to meet school goals. In general, definitions have reinforced narrow, technical perspectives about school goals and citizen input is not included in the process (Kirst & Rhodes, 2010). The amount of available resources is likely to continue to be a challenge as projections of state revenues as a percent of personal income were predicted to be at their second lowest level since the early 2000s (Minnesota Management and Budget, 2017). Resource scarcity and more prescriptive categorical aids create additional challenges for local leadership to meet needs identified as local priorities. This highlights the importance of local citizen input in establishing school goals that create the most efficiency and congruence with what the public values in their schools.

Over the past decade, the availability and flexibility of available resources has diminished for Minnesota Schools (Minnesota Department of Education, 2016). The state basic formula allowance is the fundamental source to meet local needs and priorities. Since 2003, the basic formula allowance has not kept pace with the Consumer Price Index, a measure of inflation; this gap has widened in the last, post-recession biennium (Association of Metropolitan School Districts, 2015). Estimates based on the Implicit Price Deflator, which is more closely aligned with salaries and benefits inherent in school district formula expenditures, suggested a gap of about $1,300 per pupil in the 2015 fiscal year. In addition to fewer resources, state and federal educational policy has restricted the use of funds through categorical aids and grants that emphasize narrow, technical goals.

There are examples of judicial interventions that reinforce comprehensive goals, but they often rely on the judgement of expert professionals and researchers and not local citizens. In *Claremont v. Governor of New Hampshire* (1997), the New Hampshire Supreme Court ruled that education was the key institution for developing the economic, political and social success of the state. The court identified outcomes including social, economic, scientific, technological, and political knowledge and skills that allowed students to compete in the 21st century (Reschovsky & Imazeki, 2001). The landmark 2001 New York State Supreme Court ruling, known as the *DeGrasse* decision, defined a “sound basic level of educational attainment" as meaningful civic engagement and being able to hold jobs above low-grade work (Belfield & Levin, 2002).

These court cases across different states reflected educational goals that transcend technical and individual oriented outcomes. This is not the norm for judicial cases, which instead emphasize technical outputs defined by performance on standardized achievement tests in mathematics and reading. “The estimation of cost-functions requires that we have good data on the outputs of schools that are important to citizens. Although test scores are clearly important, other goals of our educational system, while harder to measure may still be of great importance" (Reschovsky & Imazeki, 2001, p. 395).

Scholars have questioned what level of goal attainment should be considered acceptable (Augenblick, 2001; Houck, Rolle, & He, 2010). Communities differ in the resources available to children outside of school, including family resources. School finance models often do not account for those variables or how they influence the level of goal attainment schools are credited with achieving (Alexander, Schapiro, & Choi, 2010). Current models narrow the measurement of school outputs to fewer subjects, measured by standardized achievement tests results. This reinforces conclusions that schools need fewer resources compared to what would be necessary to fund a comprehensive view of education aligned with community values.

Econometric or statistical cost-function models attempt to explain variability in school resources and performance so that adequacy standards can be developed. Standards then lead to more efficient and effective processes and outcomes. Despite these efforts, there are no models that demonstrate a “straightforward relationship between how much is spent to provide education services and student, school, or school district performance” (Augenblick, 2001). The adequacy framework allows one to

connect resources to outcomes, but the models often reinforced narrow school goals and were not inclusive of citizen perspectives.

A cost-function analyses of efficiency is further confounded by broad school district goals and unknown factors that influence goal achievement and spending (Duncombe & Yinger, 2011; Imazeki & Reschovsky, 2005). The cost-function approach does not account for citizen perspectives about goals or educational processes necessary to achieve them. This study seeks to illustrate the perspectives of citizens about comprehensive school goals, contrasting school finance models that narrow goals or do not account for desired goals.

A series of legal challenges in the state of Texas illustrate both the imprecision and the omission of local values and citizen perspectives (Taylor, Alexander, Gronberg, Jansen, & Harrison 2002; *West Orange-Cove et al. v. Neeley et al. 2004*). Taylor, Alexander, Gronberg, Jansen, and Harrison (2002) noted that a cost of education index can reliably reflect and predict salary differentials but is open to criticism because of the omission of potentially important teacher and student variables. The study was intended to illustrate the need for changes to the existing cost of education index in Texas, but also illustrated the variables and mechanics of a cost-function analysis tied to student outcomes. When one limits the analysis of goals to standardized achievement tests, narrow definitions of school goals typically follow. A later Texas case using similar models applied a different estimate of student proficiency resulting in varied estimates of school funding adequacy (*West Orange-Cove et al. v. Neeley et al, 2004).*

The series of inquiries and court cases in Texas illustrate how even the most technically sound, econometric models are influenced by methodological variability at

the discretion of researchers and policy makers. Additionally, these studies limited school goals to what could be measured on the state-mandated standardized achievement tests, risking that cost-function models did not account for comprehensive goals. Imazeki and Reschovsky (2005) described that expenditures such as vocational education, arts, music, science, social studies, or content not aligned with the mathematics and reading tests would be considered inefficient. Imazeki and Reschovsky added that this "misclassification was particularly troublesome" (p. 113) because the state had established mandated content standards in those curricular areas. Examples across states and scholars suggest that school goals that extend beyond technical measures of mathematics and reading achievement are not included in cost-function estimates of adequate school funding.

Econometric analyses, including the cost-function and successful schools approach, are common in the evaluation of adequate school funding and they emphasize narrow, technical goals. Those econometric models also exclude the perspectives of local citizens, rather they rely on statistical relationships between resources and outcomes defined by standardized achievement tests. Judgment-based adequacy models, including the professional judgment and evidence-based approaches, add qualitative inferences and are described further in the following paragraphs.

Judgment-based models illustrate how including the perspective of experts and professionals can lead to more comprehensive definitions of school goals. These models exemplify how process variables, such as the effective schools and teacher practice research, can be included in adequacy analyses. These processes consider the perspectives of professionals, including educators and evidence-based approaches, yet

fall short of standards for engaging local communities and leaders in providing meaningful contributions to the development of school goals.

The professional judgment approach uses expert panels to determine the necessary resources to attain specific objectives, resulting in prototype elementary and secondary schools (Augenblick, 2001; Hanushek, 2006; Odden, Goetz, & Picus, 2010; Odden & Picus, 2000). Those prototypes are then used to project a state model for allocating foundation resources to the system, and adjustments, weighting, or additional funds necessary to meet varying student needs. The expert panels are typically not given authority to define outcomes, rather they specify educational processes that are likely to result in established targets, and then personnel and other process costs are projected. The professional judgment approach may account for varied input and process factors that are not included in the statistical models that comprise a cost-function approach (Guthrie & Rothstein, 1999). This approach affirms technical outputs attained by individuals and is not inclusive of comprehensive goals.

Reflecting on an adequacy study in New York State, Chambers, Levin, and Parrish (2006) articulated their concerns about excluding local citizen perspectives as follows:

> It is important to note that decisions about how funds are used, and the implementation of instructional models should remain in the purview of local decision makers and not be subject to state mandates. Local decision makers are in a better position to understand and respond to the needs of the communities and the students they serve. (p. 27).

The evidence-based approach is another judgement-based adequacy model. Legal cases suggest that courts may be more willing to support or mandate research-based practices leading to student achievement such as pre-school education (Ryan & Saunders, 2004). The evidence-based approach to educational adequacy is like the professional judgment approach in that it attempts to identify necessary inputs and processes. It differs by relying on research and best practices to define educational processes. Expert panels may be used later to provide specific input and feedback about the intended outcomes and necessary resources to attain those outcomes (Odden, Picus, & Fermanich, 2003; Odden, Goetz, & Picus, 2010). Evidence-based approaches align with the shift in emphasis from the level of resources available to how those resources are being allocated (Alexander, 2003). Evidence-based approaches are open to broader interpretation of goals but still do not account for local citizen priorities.

Specific cases exemplify how comprehensive goals are driven by state definitions of outputs and processes. Baker (2006) described an evidence-based model that examined school functions separately and then develops an aggregate process and resource model based on effective practice. In a 2002 Arkansas Supreme Court case, *Lake View School District No 25 v. Huckabee*, the Arkansas system for funding schools was declared unconstitutional and the legislature was ordered to develop a new system that addressed system inequality. A committee, using an evidence-based approach, developed an educational finance model that would meet the court standard. The outcome of that process was to "provide sufficient funding to deploy powerful enough educational strategies so that all students can meet the state's student performance goals in the next 10-15 years" (Odden, Picus, & Fermanich, 2003, p. 1).

Comprehensive strategies were identified based on those performance goals. Those strategies centered on six principles: (1) provide adequate funding, (2) close the achievement gap, (3) ensure accountability for results, (4) pay teachers based on performance, (5) emphasize early intervention, and (6) base all proposals on evidence-based research proven to be effective. The strategies provided flexibility at the local level, but they were based on principles derived from state level policy and research. The Arkansas Supreme Court case, while based on evidence, did not consider alignment between local community values, purpose, and goals. The existing process of aligning resources with efficacy-based practices still limited opportunities to align resources with goals. This exact strategy may represent a model with enough flexibility to allocate staff resources, prep time, and student contact toward community goals desired by local citizens. This was not explicit in the analysis or recommendations.

Cultural outputs are also deemphasized in the evidence-based model, despite their importance and connection to academic achievement. School factors contribute to effective practice and student outcomes (Lee, Louis, & Anderson, 2012). The most important process for school district leaders and principals is to develop a school culture focused on student learning, connecting accountability and effective practices (Lee, Louis, & Anderson). School cultures that positively affect student learning include a focus on professional community, organizational learning, and trust (Kruse & Louis, 2009). These practices may not be examined in the analysis of educational adequacy, reflecting a void in understanding of the relationship between resource allocation and outcomes. In fact, leadership practices affecting school culture may have minimal cost implications. Effective leadership may mitigate inefficient or ineffective program

implementation efforts designed to improve test scores that are not supported by efficacy research. Considering the lens of econometric adequacy models, measuring the interaction of input and process variables related to school culture becomes very challenging.

The evidence-based approach emphasizes aligning inputs with effective practice. The model identifies base costs and adjustments comparable to the other approaches. It has been criticized in theory and in application because it lacks effective controls for efficiencies and specific linkages to existing school performance and outcomes (Hanushek, 2006; Ryan & Saunders, 2004). Determining the effectiveness of specific practices at the local level requires more randomized controlled trials of those strategies and their combinations to assure they are effective across statewide settings (Odden, Goetz, & Picus, 2010).

Chapter 2 Summary

This chapter summarized the literature on school goals, citizen engagement, accountability, and educational adequacy. In the context of educational policy going back to "A Nation at Risk," federal and state educational policy have reinforced narrow perspectives about school goals. Those goals have focused educational analyses and processes on narrow, technical outputs accrued by individual students. This contrasts with more comprehensive definitions of school purposes that are aligned with historical definitions and local citizen perspectives. Schools in the United States and Minnesota historically have sought comprehensive goals, reflecting the values of communities and citizens. Those values have represented perceptions that schooling is both a public and private good, addressing technical and cultural outputs, serving varied purposes within

and across communities. The current educational policy context inhibits local citizen perspectives and the pursuit of comprehensive goals aligned with community values.

Understanding public perspectives may help to create the conditions for needed educational finance and process reforms (McDonnell, 2010). Historical definitions suggest a broader view of the public value provided by our schools, contributing to the cultural, civic and broad community goods beyond individual benefit. Engaging local citizens about school goals has the potential to provide rich, descriptive evidence about local community and statewide priorities. An additional benefit would be providing information that could make policy enactment, attainment of desired outcomes, and resource utilization more effective. This approach provides descriptive evidence about how local citizens and would prioritize resources. Finally, the process of engaging citizens in facilitated dialogue may serve the purpose of reengaging local communities and provide a path for continued engagement around school goals.

Minnesota is a good state to conduct citizen engagement processes because of its strong local school districts and statutory processes that create information rich sources for discourse about school goals (Minnesota Statute 120B.11). Chapter three describes how using a focus group approach to collecting data about community values and school goals can contribute to our understanding about what Minnesotans want from their schools. Results may illuminate perspectives that transcend technical, individually-oriented goals that have pervaded school accountability, finance, and policy analyses at the state and federal level. This knowledge can support educational policy that reflects community values and desires, comprehensive goals, and more effective schools.

Chapter 3: Study Design and Methodology

The purpose of this study was to answer the following research questions. 1) What do Minnesota citizens identify as the conferred values between schools and communities? 2) What goals do Minnesota citizens desire from their schools? This study examined conferred values, described as the underlying beliefs and priorities shared between schools and communities, and how they impacted school goals. This is important because current educational policy, particularly in accountability and finance, tend to narrow school goals to technical outputs accrued to individual students.

More specifically, current policy and analysis of goal attainment over-emphasize math and reading achievement measured by state and federally mandated standardized tests. This contrasts with research that citizens desire comprehensive student goals and that education is a multifaceted good encompassing both technical and cultural ends (Mitchell & Mitchell, 2003; Rothstein, Jacobson, and Wilder, 2008). This study explored if Minnesota citizens wanted goals that go beyond those emphasized in current educational policy, including cultural aims and public goods accrued by communities and society. The study design was developed to elicit perspectives of citizens about school goals, underlying conferred values between schools and communities, and ultimately what citizens want from their schools.

This chapter is divided into four sections describing the study design and methods used to address the questions about citizen values and school goals. The chapter begins with an overall description of the study design and the rationale for collecting qualitative, descriptive data. The next section, data collection, describes why focus group methods were an appropriate method to collect data related to the proposed

research questions. Perspectives on the use and advantages of focus group research in the public sector are included in this overview. The data collection section describes the details of the study including setting, participants, procedures, and materials. In the following section, data analysis procedures are described including how the focus groups were transcribed and the coding process. Methodological limitations are described in the final section of this chapter.

Study Design

To answer this study's research questions, the researcher sought thick descriptions of the values shared by schools and communities and citizen priorities for school goals. Focus group research allowed respondents to describe the details, in the context and culture of the participants, in a manner that encouraged sharing and elaboration in a group setting (Heck, 2004). Quantitative methods used to support educational policy, accountability, and school finance research may be inadvertently narrowing school goals. School finance research is steeped in quantitative methods, particularly regression analyses, because it seeks to explain causal relationships and to isolate how different variables contribute to an educational outcome studies (McEwan, 2015). Qualitative research methods have been used in educational finance studies to describe how particular applications of an educational process or inputs contribute to outcomes and have been applied in mixed methods studies.

This study explored the tension between what citizens wanted for their schools and the goals reinforced by current educational policy. The study design sought descriptions of the conferred values between schools and communities and the resulting goals to illustrate the disjunction between citizen voice and policy. Chapter 2 described

the narrowing of educational goals in current educational policy compared to historical definitions and frameworks describing schools seeking comprehensive outcomes. This study intended to explore citizen goals in order to compare what local citizens want from their schools with historical definitions, scholarly frameworks, and current educational policy.

Qualitative research principles aligned well with a citizenry expecting more engagement, local control, and input into the policy development process. Focus group techniques provided the mechanism and process to obtain descriptive data from citizens across the state of Minnesota. Focus groups enhance the dynamic between leaders and constituents promoting the expertise of citizens and a service orientation in leadership (Ansay, Perkins, & Nelson, 2004). Focus group methods were chosen because this study's research questions required descriptive data about citizen perceptions about school and community values and school goals. The focus group format provided a consistent structure and format for each region and participant experience.

Interview questions were designed to elicit citizen perspectives about school and community values and school goals. Data was collected in a participatory, group process, which sought to strengthen direct citizen engagement about school goals deemphasized in the current policy making process. The dialectic nature of focus group conversations provided a forum for obtaining varied perspectives. This approach was necessary because the researcher sought to make connections between citizens and their values and school goals. Focus group research was optimal because the research questions necessitated descriptive, dialectic evidence from citizens about goals and values. These constructs required depth and nuance versus more quantitative, statistical

approaches. Moreover, regional focus groups were implemented to explore evidence supporting contextual interpretation and divergent perspectives (Guba & Lincoln, 1998).

Representative citizen participants were important to this study. Information rich cases or individuals with the most to share about the purpose of the study were preferred over randomized participants (Patton, 1987). A critical criterion for selection was whether study participants would allow the researcher to learn the most about the topic of interest. This study relied on participants most closely tied to the program of interest, which was local perception of school goals. Additionally, the purpose of a qualitative study was to go in-depth on a topic, resulting in a need to be more selective about study participants (Krueger & Casey, 2009). Attending to the subtle variations of responses of group participants allowed the researcher to gain insight into the varied perspectives within and across groups (Barbour & Schostak, 2011).

Regional representation from across the state of Minnesota was sought. The purpose of conducting focus groups across various regions was to represent the richness of perspective in the state of Minnesota. Variability in regional perspectives exists because of the historical differences in economic, political, and ethnic heritage in those regions. Currently, the varied regions across the state of Minnesota also differ in their urban and rural characteristics, economic conditions, socio-economic differences, and ethnic make-up. Seeking regional representation was an additional aspect of the study design intended to gain varied insight and to deepen understanding of values and school goals. Regional characteristics are explained further in the setting section of this chapter.

Data Collection

Originally created by the Bureau of Applied Social Research at Columbia University for market research, focus group interview techniques have grown as a tool for academic research (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas, & Robson, 2002). Focus group research generally involves small groups of people identified as "information-rich" sources (Patton, 2002), who engage in a facilitated conversation. That conversation is designed to facilitate the understanding of group meanings, processes, attitudes, preferences, and norms (Krueger & Casey, 2009). Focus group facilitation encourages the authentic stories through the voice of participants (Wilson, 1997). The verbal interchange inherent in focus group methods supports novel exchange between participants allowing for multiple and varied viewpoints (Heck, 2004). Focus group processes enhance respondent ability to generate ideas and consensus and the ability to understand the how and why underlying findings (Kitzinger, 1995).

The focus group process has been used in past studies of educational policy and school goals. Focus groups have been used as a school engagement strategy to create consensus around goals and understand individual priorities (Wagner, 1995). In a study of college student perceptions of curricular requirements, Hendershott and Wright (1993) used a mixed-method strategy including surveys and focus groups with a stratified sample of 48 college seniors. The researchers found that the interactive nature of the focus groups yielded more descriptive data about the inter-disciplinary course offerings than using survey data alone. In a similar study using a focus group methodology, Curren, Bajjaly, Feehan, and O'Neill (1998) examined faculty perspectives on course offerings in a Library and Information Science (LIS) curriculum.

By employing focus groups, the researchers were able to uncover program strengths and weaknesses and to better understand faculty perceptions. Aligned with those studies, this paper sought descriptive evidence of what citizens want from their schools through focus group methods.

This study employed a focus group technique designed to generate descriptions of school goals across varied regions in the state of Minnesota. Minnesota was a good state to collect this data because of its history of local school district engagement, moralistic culture, and emphasis on transparency and democratic values. Data was collected from different regions of the state to assure geographic, political, economic, historical, and cultural differences were included in the data collection process.

Regional focus groups were conducted with information-rich participants selected from a pool of local citizens who serve on school district curriculum advisory councils. The participant recruitment process leveraged leadership from local school district superintendents and the Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA) organization. For each focus group, the researcher collected data starting with conferred values between schools and communities, graduate outcomes, perceived value of education, and priorities for schools. The researcher sought citizens representing various regions of Minnesota including greater Minnesota and the Twin Cities. The purpose was to make inferences about citizen perspectives about school and community values, and their connection to school goals. Specifics about the participants, settings, process, and materials are described below.

Focus group researchers address validity by assuring common protocols and procedures and maintaining researcher neutrality (Krueger & Casey, 2009). The

researcher used a common protocol for each focus group including introduction, norms, and question route. Facilitation included varied techniques, including round robin formats and silent recording of responses, assuring that less vocal members of the groups still contributed. The researcher has facilitated focus groups for ten years in a variety of contexts and a common co-facilitator was used to assure adherence to norms and consistency in the process. The same introductory statement, directions, and questions were used with those participants. Focus group protocols and analysis procedures also assure validity by aligning issues, themes, and questions with literature and experts (Barbour & Schostak, 2011). The specific questions for the focus groups arose from the oral preliminary examination in consultation with the researcher's dissertation committee members.

Finally, credibility was addressed by seeking participants from a variety of regions across the state of Minnesota. The use of regional representation was intended to add to the richness of perspectives and capture the geographic differences across the state of Minnesota. When the researcher was unable to secure enough participation from all regions, a questionnaire format was used with willing participants from the regions not represented by focus groups. This process was intended to gather additional qualitative data, while recognizing the limitations when that data was not collected in a group format allowing for depth and discussion. Inherent in focus group research is the risk that results may not be generalizable, and while sample size was a concern in this study, geographic breadth was sought to make state-wide inferences more plausible. The addition of questionnaire responses from regions not represented in a focus group was intended to secure varied perspectives from across the state of Minnesota.

Setting.

The focus groups were conducted in regional centers in the state of Minnesota, in cities identified as the geographic and/or economic hubs of the region. Regions were based upon the existing Educational Cooperative Service Units (ECSUs) whose mission is to provide regional professional development, technical support, and programming (Figure 1). In most cases, the regional centers have ECSU service centers that have conference room facilities or centrally located facilities that were used in the MASA Minnevate! (2014) process. This setting was selected because of amenities and their proximity to communities in the region making transportation to the focus group process easier for participants. Examining the research questions across regions within the state of Minnesota provided an opportunity to examine if values and goals were divergent across regions.

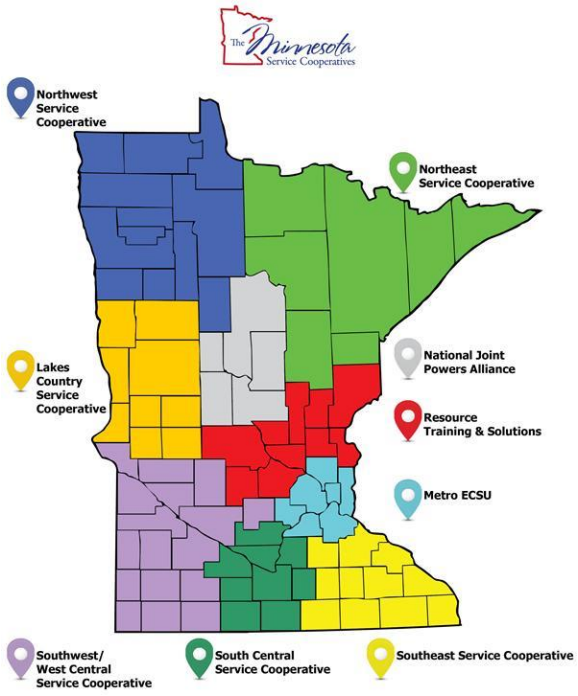

Figure 1. Regional Educational Cooperative Service Units in the state of Minnesota

These regions represent geographic and cultural areas of the state. There is also substantial intra-community variation within those regions regarding size of communities, economic indicators, demographic variables, and cultural backgrounds. Each ECSU region outside of the Twin Cities includes regional hub cities and smaller rural communities and farm or forestry regions that are sparsely populated. The Metro ECSU includes Minneapolis and St. Paul and suburban communities and is distinct in its composition of urban and suburban communities. Although the other ECSU regions vary in economic and population characteristics, there are no patterns from this study's literature review that would predict differences in regional preferences about school goals.

Participants.

Citizen participants who represented the various regions of the state of Minnesota were included in the focus group process. Members of school district curriculum advisory councils were targeted because they were information-rich sources who possessed a working knowledge of school purpose, goals, and values. Minnesota Statute 120B.11 mandates that each school district has a curriculum advisory council that represents the varied perspectives within the school community. Recruiting curriculum advisory council members assured that participants were citizens of the school community and had a working knowledge of school goals for that specific locale.

The Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA) partnered with the researcher to recruit participants and it later helped with logistics and facilitation. MASA uses the ECSU regions to support the organizational leadership structure and

assure representation from superintendents and district leaders across the state of Minnesota. That same structure supported solicitation of focus group participants. First, a common recruitment e-mail and message was sent by MASA leadership to 300 superintendents in the state of Minnesota (Appendix A).

Participants were then recruited through their school district superintendent who submitted names to the researcher. The researcher, with support from MASA staff, asked school district superintendents to identify one person from their school district curriculum advisory committee who possessed a broad perspective about school goals. Sixty-eight potential participants were identified by superintendents (Table 2). Those participants represented seven of the eight Educational Service Cooperative Unit (ECSU) regions in the state. The researcher then sent e-mail invitations to all sixty-eight potential participants including the date, time, and location of the planned focus group in their region (Appendix A).

The researcher obtained commitments from at least three participants from the Rochester, St. Cloud, and Twin Cities Regions of the state of Minnesota. Focus groups were conducted on October 10, 2016 in Rochester, October 17, 2016 in St. Cloud, and November 2, 2016 in St. Paul. Sixty-eight potential participants were identified and twelve of those potential participants attended a focus group session. In other regions, multiple attempts were made to secure at least three participants for focus groups to no avail. In order to obtain perspectives from other regions and to increase the overall participation rate, the researcher sought perspectives through a questionnaire containing the same instructions and questions as the focus groups. Additional participants were solicited in the non-represented regions through an invitation to participate in that

questionnaire. The researcher went back to the original list of sixty-eight potential participants identified by superintendents and sent invitations to those who had not participated in one of the focus groups.

Table 2

Focus group and questionnaire invitees and participants

Region	Individuals Identified by Superintendents	Focus Group Participants	Questionnaire Participants
Lakes Country	1	0	0
National Joint Powers Alliance	10	0	2
Northeast	0	0	0
Northwest	5	0	1
Resource Training and Solutions	6	2	1
Southeast	19	3	0
South Central	7	0	0
Southwest/West Central	10	1	2
Twin Cities	10	6	0
Total	**68**	**12**	**6**

In December 2016, six additional participants completed the questionnaire process using the same questions that were asked in the focus groups. Questionnaire responses were completed by the end of December 2016. Results represented a sample of information-rich sources from across the state of Minnesota. Due to differences in this data collection process, the researcher analyzed this data separate from the focus group findings, followed-up by a comparative analysis. This analysis procedure will be explained further in the "Analysis" subsection of this chapter. Using a questionnaire process as a substitute for focus group participants is a study limitation because the nature of the questionnaire process did not allow for the dialectic nature of the focus group process to occur.

Materials and procedures.

All focus group sessions were held in meeting rooms with adequate lighting, comfortable chairs, tables, climate controls, and sound integrity. Participants sat in a circular arrangement at tables and the facilitator and co-facilitator were present at those same tables. Participants were provided a copy of the IRB consent form (Appendix B), paper, and pens, and were asked to write their names on a name tent. Questionnaire participants received the same introductory script in an online survey format and the same questions with two exceptions. The researcher redacted the introductory language in the beginning of question one and the language in the final question alluding to what was discussed in the focus group.

Introductory statements and questions were developed by the researcher with assistance from the researcher's advisor and committee members. Each focus group was facilitated by the researcher, assisted by MASA staff in a co-facilitation role, using a common introduction and question route (Appendix C). Questions were designed to elicit the underlying meaning of participant perspectives (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas, & Robson, 2001). Questions were clustered around the concepts of values that schools and communities receive from one another, goals, and priorities for education. Questions were explicitly related to citizen perspective of societal values, purpose, and goals vis à vis schools. Aligned with research on focus group techniques, facilitation included flexibility on the part of facilitators. Facilitation also included probing more deeply into participant values and preferences (Keeney, Winterfeldt, & Eppel, 1990). Groups were audio recorded using a digital voice recorder, backed up by a second digital voice recorder and facilitator notes.

Data Analysis

The purpose of this study was to examine themes regarding school goals desired by citizens across the state of Minnesota. Understanding the underlying conferred values between schools and communities was important to understanding what goals citizens want for their schools. The data analysis process was planned, verifiable, and sequential, using a classic analysis strategy with computer software assistance (Krueger & Casey, 2009). A constant comparative analytical framework was also employed in the latter phases of the coding process to examine themes and relationships across and within questions (Glasser, 1965; Krueger & Casey). The detailed coding process will be described in the "Analysis" subsection in the following paragraphs. The combination of these two strategies required the researcher to check themes and dimensions continuously as the coding process progressed. The following sections highlight the systematic analysis process used by the researcher.

Transcription.

A verbatim transcript was generated for analysis, capturing all participant statements during the entirety of the focus groups and questionnaire responses. To protect the identity of the participants, names and any identifying information were redacted from the transcripts and written responses prior to reporting. Transcripts were uploaded into the NVivo qualitative research software program designed to conduct qualitative data analysis. Coding of transcribed responses using the classic analysis strategy took place within the qualitative research software program. Questionnaire responses were included in the data set, initially as an independent set, and then as part of the larger data set. The researcher applied the following analysis process to the

questionnaire responses and then combined the analysis to include both the questionnaire and focus group responses as overall findings.

Analysis.

The classic analysis strategy identifies data themes and relationships between ideas and concepts (Krueger & Casey, 2009). Starting with a transcribed audio recording, the classic analysis strategy follows these steps: 1) organize responses relevant to each question, 2) group like responses under each question, 3) develop themes and sub-themes based on frequency, specificity, emotion, and extensiveness 4) examine differences across groups 5) summarize across questions with the entire data set. The constant comparative method required the researcher to identify and test themes during steps 3 and 4 of the classic analysis procedure. The process included fluid comparisons of responses to data already coded and integrating themes as the coding proceed, delimiting and distinguishing between themes, and finally establishing and writing prevailing themes (Glasser, 1965). Questionnaire results were analyzed separately from focus group responses and were found to be substantively consistent with focus group results. Those individual responses were included in the overall summary of findings.

The final step in the analytical process was to create qualitative and quantitative reporting mechanisms. Qualitative responses were reported by cluster themes and sub-themes using quotes and salient responses to illustrate individual and group perspectives. Quantifiable responses were shared through descriptive statistics including frequencies and measures of central tendency within and across groups. Reporting of the data included the themes within and across groups, quotes and ideas from

participants, and quantitative summary of the priorities noted by respondents and group consensus. While quantitative analysis was limited by small sample size, the entire response set of all focus group and questionnaire responses included over 200 individual responses that were coded to themes about values and goals. The credibility and trustworthiness of the findings in academic focus groups is enhanced by adhering to principles that include openness, rigor, and analysis processes that are defensible, systematic, and verifiable (Krueger & Casey, 2009). These principles were adhered to in the transcription, coding, thematic clustering, and analytical process.

Limitations

Focus group research is limited by factors including group dynamics, dominant individuals, hidden agendas, and truthfulness of respondents (Krueger & Casey, 2009; Barbour & Schostak, 2011). In this study, those limitations were addressed through the recruiting and facilitation processes. Credibility and trustworthiness were addressed by following the same script and questioning route for each group and by using the primary researcher as the lead facilitator for all groups. Facilitation processes included varied techniques that brought all voices into the focus group conversation. Techniques included participant reflection and recording of responses followed by round-robin sharing of ideas. Additionally, the researcher and co-facilitator intervened when individuals were monopolizing time by using eye contact, body language, and direct probes to elicit responses from other participants.

The study addressed threats to credibility by pilot testing questions, following a systematic questioning and facilitation process, and through systematic, verifiable analysis techniques. The focus group process and question route were vetted by

professional focus group researchers, educational leaders, and citizens. A notable threat to credibility was the addition of questionnaire data lacking the same depth as focus group conversations. The researcher did not include questionnaire data in the same data set until affirming common themes from focus groups were evident.

Coding is another threat to validity, particularly using a grounded theory methodology like the constant comparative analysis (Barbour & Schostak, 2011; Glaser, 1965). The researcher followed a systematic coding process identifying themes across questions and then across the entire data set. Results of that coding were grounded in the researcher's background in education and the literature review undergirding this study. The researcher can attest to a common, systematic coding process across questions and themes, but replicability of that coding process would be impacted by the grounding of the researcher conducting the analysis. The researcher acknowledges the potential bias in the coding process given the researcher's grounding and practice experiences in this area.

This process also limited study comparisons across regions, where a different process and small representation from some regions did not support adequate sample size or depth of focus group conversation. The small turnout and limited number of regions represented in this study are a threat to construct and external validity. Regional comparisons were not made because only three focus groups were conducted and only six of eight regions were represented, some by very small numbers of participants. Eighteen total participants were involved in this study either through focus groups or questionnaire participation.

An additional caution about the purpose of this study and transferability is noteworthy. To promote evidence about school goals being grounded in knowledge of purpose and goals, information-rich sources were carefully selected. The researcher's targeted recruiting of curriculum advisory members assured that participants were familiar with comprehensive perspectives about school goals. Superintendents were specifically asked through an e-mail script to select individuals who possess broad knowledge and perspective about school goals in that region. This study did not seek to generalize beyond those perspectives with consideration of context and timing of the focus groups. The lack of generalizability is an existing threat to external validity when using focus group research (Krueger & Casey, 2009).

The researcher intended to explore differences across regions in conferred values and school goals, but the insufficient sampling across regions did not support that exploratory analysis. Additional participant limitations included the potential bias inherent in having superintendents identify participants and the possible reinforcement of the perspective of formal authority rather than citizen perspectives. The researcher also did not seek ethnic, age, or socio-economic diversity and focus groups were not representative of the diversity typical in most Minnesota communities. The combination of these sampling characteristics is a limitation of this study. There is a need for further exploration of dominant narrative and follow-up with citizens representing a more diverse population and one that is not as closely tied to school district leadership.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of Minnesota Citizens about school goals and the conferred values between schools and communities. Those conferred values represented the shared beliefs and priorities based on fundamental, underlying values in schools and their communities. The research questions addressed by this study were: 1) What do Minnesota citizens identify as the conferred values between schools and communities? 2) What goals do Minnesota citizens desire from their schools?

Results of this chapter reflect an exploratory qualitative analysis of citizen perspectives related to the research questions posed in this study. The coding process followed a classic analysis strategy by question and theme and a constant comparative framework to check findings as new data was coded. Themes were developed based upon frequency, specificity, and extensiveness within and across questions. Representative participant quotes were included in the analysis and results to illustrate frequent and salient responses that best represented citizen perspectives. The researcher analyzed results independent of a specific theoretical framework and the key findings follow. The chapter concludes with a brief description of the connections between key findings and the descriptors in the Mitchell and Mitchell (2003) framework of education as both a public and private good.

A codebook reflecting themes, a description of those themes, the number of sources in which those themes appeared, and frequencies is available in Appendix D. Data from all focus group questions are included in the codebook. Evidence contributing to the key results and the research questions is highlighted in this chapter.

Alignment between the Mitchell and Mitchell (2003) framework and those themes is introduced and then described further in chapter 5.

This chapter highlights four key findings reflecting the purpose of this study. The literature review problematized potential differences between citizen perspectives about comprehensive goals and current educational policy. Key findings of this study were as follows: 1) Conferred values between schools and their communities were strong and connected to desired goals, 2) Citizens desired comprehensive school goals, 3) Citizens described desired goals that benefitted students, their communities, and broader society, 4) Individual student goals were most prominently mentioned, and they included academic, social-emotional, and productive dispositions. The following paragraphs describe the four key results derived from citizen perspectives about school goals and the conferred values between school and communities. Results are illustrated by quotes articulating the identified themes.

Conferred Values Between Schools and Communities

To more clearly delineate the research question about shared values, participants were explicitly asked to respond to questions about what values schools and communities share and confer to one another. Participants described this process as the sharing and conveying of fundamental beliefs that guided priorities and goals and tangible asset development across communities and schools. Additional evidence was gleaned from the full response set across all focus groups and questionnaire responses. Results included two broad types of feedback: The first set of responses reflected how schools and communities shared values like pride, passing on generational success, and celebrating accomplishments. Secondly, responses described value in terms of a

tangible asset that schools and communities provided for each other. The following descriptions summarize citizen perspectives about the conferred values between schools and communities.

Participants persistently described the importance of school-community connections as a critical function of schools in their community. Simply valuing education was described as a commonly shared value by participants from all regions. This included the pride communities associated with school success and the desire to educate the next generation of children. Common values included connectedness and relationships, which respondents described frequently across all regions. The following participant characterizations demonstrate that commitment to relationships, school-community connections, and valuing the next generation:

> The schools should impart students with an awareness and appreciation that many others have contributed to them in many ways in order for them to make a way for themselves, and they in turn, should be active and do the same in whatever capacity they can [Participant in focus group on October 10, 2016].

Beyond general descriptions of school community connections, participants also described educational activities that included citizenship and tangible actions such as volunteering. The following participant quote illustrates this perspective.

> Schools are starting to do a lot of education around good citizenship, volunteering, being a part of your community, helping others, I think that is one area that can be a direct correlation back to your community [Participant in focus group on November 2, 2016].

Citizen participants in this study described the importance of valuing the next generation and schools symbolizing an investment in the community and the next generation of children. Specific descriptions included the investment in student experiences and facilities. Schools were characterized as a primary symbol of investment in the next generation. Participants also described that community investments in students would increase the chances that students would return to the community after post-secondary education. Comments to specific questions about conferred values and throughout the response set suggested a mutually shared investment in children and the next generation. Participants added that this shared investment was intended to ensure a sustainable future for their communities. The following participant description communicated this principle.

> We have seen in fairly recent years many of our students who went away to college and were living away for a while come back to settle and raise their family and that has really made a difference for us [Participant in focus group on October 10, 2016].

Community pride in schools was a theme expressed across specific questions about shared values and in other response sets. Pride was derived from broad concepts, such as the positive notation of the investment in the next generation. Pride was also noted in how school success represents the community, such as the pride in graduates, band performance, and athletic team success. Pride was recognized in the accomplishment of students and the success of the schools as a primary employer and caretaker of community resources. One participant illuminated this perspective in this way:

> In our small town, the public schools, besides being the main employer in town, are the center of our community. Student achievement, academic, and athletic [success] is a core source of pride [Participant in focus group on October 17, 2016].

Tangible benefits between schools and their communities were described by participants ranging from stewardship of financial resources in the community to shared services and service learning. Participants recognized the financial value that schools provide to a community along with the school obligation to spend community resources wisely. These results also complemented shared values describing an investment in future generations. Specific examples included serving the elderly, local businesses, clean-up projects, and employment and volunteering. One respondent described these benefits as also encompassing learning opportunities for students:

> Education, if supported appropriately by a community, can help fill in gaps and create real life learning for students. Community can take learning from the books and classroom and give students opportunities in the real world to enhance their skills and learning. Community can make learning 'real' and impactful. It takes away the irrelevance and makes communication and problem solving more authentic [Questionnaire participant in December, 2016].

Positive reflections about the relationships that are fostered through school-community partnerships were shared by participants as both a shared value and as a tangible asset to their community. Specific examples included connectedness through service and relationships, which were themes across all regions and participants. The tangible assets that schools and communities provided for each other consistently

included the concept of service, which was about the mutual benefit provided to community members and students. Specific examples included students and senior citizen relationship building, community park enhancement, and community clean-up efforts. One respondent described this as follows:

> We have a lot of community members coming in and doing things with our students, and we have a lot of our students going out into community organizations and helping them with service. The values we get is that value of community and that we are in this together and we are going to help each other out [Participant in focus group on October 17, 2016].

Clear and consistent shared values were described across focus groups and questionnaire respondents indicating that citizens believed in purposeful connections between school and community values and goals. Those connections reinforced that shared values have both a modifying effect on how schools approach their work and are vehicles to provide mutual benefit to schools and their communities. Rather than only being focused on technical outputs for individual students, these values also reinforced principles like connectedness, community sustainability, service, and generational success.

Comprehensive School Goals

Citizen participants in this study desired comprehensive school goals. Comprehensive school goals included varied student goals ranging from academic to social-emotional skills, as well as, goals focused on community and society. Focus group questions elicited citizen perspective about desired graduate capabilities, preparation for the future, contributions to community, the purpose of schools, and top

priorities for their schools. The focus group process was designed to create dialogue around these questions in order to understand depth and breadth of citizen perspectives. This was important to answer the research question about what goals citizens desired for their schools. Questions were designed to elicit both short and long-term perspectives and to consider the community, societal, and individual implications of goals. The following summary highlights participant descriptions of the need to pursue comprehensive school goals. Participant perspectives describing specific, discreet goals are described in later sections.

It is important to understand this result, citizens desiring comprehensive school goals, in the context of them being specifically asked to consider varied perspectives. It is possible that question wording was responsible for this result. Responses to a more generic question about priorities for school goals also suggested a desire for comprehensive goals. Notably, evidence could have reinforced a perspective that education is for individual attainment of academic skills, but results showed a much more comprehensive view of the purpose of education.

Results of this study showed that citizens desired comprehensive educational goals that spanned academic, character development, and mindset growth for their students. Academic skills included content area fundamentals and broad skills, such as communicating effectively through speaking and writing. Citizens desired that students could apply those academic skills in authentic experiences like work-based learning at local businesses. Participants in this study desired well-rounded students who could succeed professionally and in their community. This participant summarized this perspective well:

> I would hope they would be prepared to be a good citizen and to give back to their community. They should be able to use the technology needed to be successfully in their job. They should have a well-rounded education along with good people skills [Participant in focus group on November 2, 2016].

Student character development was also an important goal described across all focus groups. Traits such as honesty, trustworthiness, respect, social-emotional skills, kindness, and relationship building were described as traits that schools should be developing in their students. A companion concept was developing student mindset including attributes like work ethic, grit, resilience, and motivation. Respondents clearly desired students that possessed an array of academic and social-emotional skills and expected schools would address these comprehensive outcomes, exemplified by this quote:

> Honestly, I would want them [students] to be an informed, empathetic, creative and effective citizen-activist [Questionnaire participant in December, 2016].

The following quote also exemplifies the comprehensive, character and disposition-based goals citizens desired for students:

> I would want them [students] to be able to tell facts from opinions and truth from lies. I would want them to be intellectually and morally curious: Why does this work the way it does? How does this decision affect the most vulnerable? [Participant in focus group on November 2, 2016].

The summary question in the focus group process exemplified citizen desire for comprehensive school goals and was corroborated by the complete response set. Participants were asked to provide their top three priorities for education in their

community based on what was discussed. Responses to this question were least susceptible to researcher bias and group dynamics because respondents were able to independently record their preferences prior to the focus group discussion. Focus group participants were provided time to write those responses on a notepad and questionnaire respondents entered their responses in an online field. Responses reinforced other evidence that citizens preferred both technical and cultural goals for individual students. They also noted community and societal purposes that transcended technical, student-oriented goals.

Most independent reflection included a variety of goals among the top priorities spanning students, communities, and society. Perspectives reflected a comprehensive set of outputs ranging from social-emotional to academic outcomes. Citizens also desired educational processes that individualized experiences for students, improved educational processes and staffing, extended learning opportunities before and after school, and support for students and families who do not have adequate resources to support their children. A questionnaire respondent summarized preferences this way:

> 1. Developing life long, self-directed learners. 2. Build strong connections between school and the community. 3. Development of 21st century skills for students [Questionnaire participant in December, 2016].

Fifty-one priorities were noted across participants. Consistent with overall findings, the most frequently described theme was individual student goals, with 25 of the identified priorities falling in this realm. Nine and seven of those priorities were in the areas of societal and community goals, respectively. Ten responses were outside of this coding scheme including enhancing specific teaching and learning practices and

teacher quality. The most frequently noted specific item was equitable outcomes and experiences for all students, identified by five participants as a priority for education in their community. Responses described an individual approach to providing equitable opportunities for students with a desired outcome being education leading to more equitable society. Three responses specifically noted closing the achievement gap as a priority.

Within the theme of individual student goals, frequencies ranged from one respondent to four participants advocating for a specific priority. Those priorities included all the previously described themes including building character and productive dispositions, preparation for post-secondary education and lifelong learning, adaptability, as well as academic skills. In probing responses by individual focus group and questionnaire results, no priority was noted across all regions and nearly all participants noted different priorities for goals. Results suggest consensus around individual student goals being the emphasis of education, but perspectives varied about what specific purposes and goals should be prioritized across regions and individual participants. The next key finding of this study describes more detailed citizen perspectives about goals that benefit individual students, communities, and broader society.

Goals Benefitting Broader Society, Local Communities, and Individual Students

The essential question of this study was about what goals citizens wanted for their schools. Focus group questions were designed to understand the depth and breadth of citizen perspectives about school goals. As previously described, questions provided a forum to identify school goals that benefitted individual students, communities, and

broader society, but they did not necessarily require participants to identify comprehensive goals. Specific questions about individual student capabilities and community and societal goals were analyzed using the classic analysis strategy. Using a constant comparative framework, themes about school purpose and goals were analyzed and refined using the entire data set. (Table 3). The following sections describe societal, local community, and individual student goals, represented by salient participant quotes.

Table 3

School values, purpose, and goals: Themes and sub-themes described by study participants

Most frequent and extensive themes represented across groups and responses *Frequent and extensive themes not represented in every group or by fewer responses*		
Societal: Goals attributed to broader society	Community: Goals attributed to local community	Individual Student: Goals attributed to individual students
Engaged and productive citizens *Betterment of society* *Equity*	**Connectedness** **Service** **Sustainable future** *Pride* *Stewardship*	**Adaptability** **Authentic learning** **Character** **Critical thinking** **Lifelong learning** **Post-secondary preparation** **Productive dispositions** *Collaboration skills* *Self-sufficiency*

Societal goals.

Schools producing engaged and productive citizens was the most prominent societal goal based on frequency and extensiveness of responses. Societal goals were identified at a broader level than school goals, with benefits demonstrated beyond a

local community. Participants from all regions described the connection between education and citizenship, democratic participation, and contributing to society economically and socially. Attributes of engaged and productive citizens included someone who affected others positively, was well rounded, contributed to their community, and recognized their ability to make a global impact.

The general betterment of society through educating the next generation of children was a companion concept. Participants described that schools foster a more thoughtful society focused on collaboration and working towards common goals. This participant reflection described the value of students contributing to community and society.

> Well educated children have a value to their community whether it's a small community or a broad-based community, because they will become active members of society [Participant in focus group on October 10, 2016].

In contrast to more individualistic purposes, participants described the cycle of how individuals benefit from being well-educated and in-turn, support the next generation in attaining something larger than oneself. That range was represented by this participant perspective:

> Our community gets a school system that teaches our children to see beyond their own selves and learn, think and impact a larger world [Participant in focus group on October 17, 2016].

Equity was mentioned as a societal benefit, with participants describing education as a vehicle that provides equity and opportunity to children that, in turn, benefits society. Equity was not described in a comparable manner to the current

concerns about the achievement gap in Minnesota. There were no explicit comments describing equity in opportunity and achievement based on race or socio-economic status as a school goal. Specifics about closing the socio-economic and ethnic opportunity and outcome gaps were not described by participants in this study. Rather, citizens described how education was a mechanism that created opportunities for children to pursue their goals regardless of their backgrounds. Examples were shared about specific supports provided by schools for children and families and how an educated population benefitted everyone. One participant synthesized societal goals in the following way:

> It's a Confucian ideal, if you know your relationships you take care of that, if it's the betterment of society. As a democratic country, part of the reason we provide a public education system is for the betterment of society and an educated citizenry [Participant in focus group on November 2, 2016].

Community goals.

Community goals reflected comparable themes to societal goals, but the benefits were attributed to the local communities in specific ways. A distinction between these two clusters was that benefits were described in the local community rather than the broad societal level. Citizen participants described these community goals with more tangible examples from their local communities and schools. Societal goals represented broader constructs that transcended individual communities. Citizenship was a theme described at both the societal and community levels. Human connection made through service was a prominent concept in the descriptions of community goals. Formal service-learning projects, volunteerism, and community service were described across

all regions in communities of various sizes and locales. Conferred values included gratitude, empathy, connectivity, self-worth, charity, and responsibility.

Service was described as mutually beneficial to schools and communities as well as those serving and being served. Connectedness was a related theme, as evidenced by collaboration between schools and business partners, schools providing venues and events in athletics and the arts, and inter-generational projects and relationship building. Schools were a source of pride and prestige. Participants shared the deep connections and relationships that were developed through these examples. Those relationships were described by one participant as follows:

> I want children to be part of a group where they know that people care about them. I think you can have all the brains, you can be brilliant, but if you don't have a core group of people who support you through thick and thin, life's not going to be very nice [Participant in focus group on November 2, 2016].

Stewardship was a theme that pervaded community values, purpose, and goals. Although this was not a goal independent of other school functions, participants described the importance of community perceptions regarding financial and human resources. An underlying assumption was that schools have a relationship with their communities, and therefore they have a responsibility to spend fundraising, local levy, and other financial resources wisely. Terms used to describe expectations around stewardship of financial resources included cost-effective, respectful, strategic, and student-centered. The following quote summarizes this perspective:

> We enjoy [community] support in terms of fundraising, levies for learning, and bonding for building. They provide us opportunities to serve them with area service projects [Participant in focus group on October 10, 2016].

An interesting theme emerged around the future of communities, particularly smaller communities. Education was described as a path to creating a sustainable future for children and a hope for a sustainable future for the community itself. Specific examples were shared about how educational partnerships benefitted community business and industries, particularly industrial technology and manufacturing. In some cases, the school system was one of the largest employers in the community. Participants described a need to sustain those businesses through school partnerships that trained new employees and provided incentives for students to return to the community after attending college. A perception that schools were of high quality was shared as a variable that leads students back to communities as adults, in some cases working for the school system and others choosing the school system for their children. Interdependency between schools and communities was a consistent theme, exemplified by this participant's perspective:

> Our community values education. They see it as a key for our children's future. They are invested in bringing students back after a college education to our community. They see the value in investing in our young people to keep our community vibrant [Participant in focus group on October 10, 2016].

Community goals represented technical, student benefits gained through community interactions, as well as community benefits such as sustaining economic and cultural legacies. It was clear that some respondents saw schools as the seminal

institution in their community passing on community legacies, as an employer, and a source of community pride and connection.

Individual goals.

Individual goals were mentioned with the most frequency in the focus group and questionnaire processes. Those goals were exclusively oriented to individual students in the school system. Themes clustered around individual attributes and dispositions than on academic skills. Those attributes and dispositions fell into three primary sub-themes: developing character traits and productive dispositions, application of critical thinking, problem solving, and adaptability, and preparation for future learning. Academic skills were not completely absent, but no pattern emerged. Rather, academic skills included many discrete content skills, knowledge, and applications. Broad communication skills were the most frequent category of academic skills mentioned, but only mentioned in two regions, and responses ranged from being able to speak clearly and to different audiences to writing coherently. Collaboration and working well with others were mentioned in all focus groups. The frequency and extensiveness of those contributions were not as salient as participant perspectives about the character traits, dispositions, and skills. Citizen preference that schools pursue individual student goals was substantial enough to be considered a separate result and will be described in the following section.

Individual Student Goals: Character Traits and Skills and Academic Skills.

In the area of individual student goals, citizens preferred schools address a broad range of short and long-term student outcomes. Citizen perspectives described a desire for well-rounded students who possessed academic skills and character traits needed to

be successful in school and in life. Results of this study suggest the development of well-rounded students should be an integral school goal. Possessing character traits and dispositions that supported life-long success were prominently described in individual student goals. The following describes how participants described specific skills and dispositions and how they were perceived to be important for individual students.

Character traits and skills.

Character traits were described by participants as a critical school goal. Those traits included citizenship, kindness, respectfulness, caring, being well-rounded, and being authentic. Aligned with those traits, respondents described dispositions and skills such as determination, perseverance, grit, work ethic, being goal-oriented, having a growth mindset and resilience. These dispositions were the most frequently mentioned educational purposes and goals described in the focus groups and questionnaires. Respondents affirmed the importance and ability of schools to foster these skills in students. Some went as far as to suggest the most important aspect of academic learning was struggling through challenging content to develop these dispositions. These two participant perspectives described varied aspects of character development:

> We have to teach [students] growth mindset. Specifically, teach them that failure is a part of learning and that its o.k. teach them the explicit internal message that needs to go through their mind when they fail, it's not a bad thing, it's just a part of learning [Participant in focus group on October 10, 2016].

Citizenship can be thought of as both a cultural and technical good. This quote illustrates how participants described citizenship as an individual asset ascribed to individual students.

> It helps us teach the kids how to be good citizens and good community members and how to give back and take care of each other [Participant in focus group on October 17, 2016].

A related theme was preparing students who could think critically and adapt to a changing work environment and society. Focus group discussions frequently and extensively described the importance of critical thinking skills. Student critical thinking was the second most frequent individual student theme and was mentioned across all focus groups. Participants described this in a variety of ways, including critical thinking and problem solving, being intellectually and morally curious, thinking of problems in novel ways, independent thinking, critical reading and writing, thinking logically, and applying 21st century skills. Creativity and design were specifically mentioned in this context. A participant aptly described creativity and critical thinking through the following contribution:

> I want students to be creative thinkers, problem solvers, have the ability to communicate well, respect perspectives and opinions, but speak factually and relevantly to differing ideas. To have the ability to ask questions and seek processes and avenues to solutions [Participant in focus group on November 2, 2016].

The rationale offered for this school goal ranged from the current state of politics, to the need to decipher truth and fiction about what is being said, to the expectations of employers and careers that require thinking over replication of process. Participants recognized the changing nature of work and the expectations of employers that workers are more adaptive and able to think critically. Citizens described that

schools need to pursue goals that assure individuals can adapt to change at work. This was particularly important when employment or life circumstances changed. The following perspective exemplifies that view of future learning and employment for today's students:

> Nothing worse than someone spinning in their life. It's not reading, writing, and arithmetic. It's politics, it's the continuation of where you want to go and how you need to get there and what you need to do now. Being able to adapt as jobs change and as times change, being able to make changes yourself [Participant in focus group on November 2, 2016].

Adaptability was a theme that resonated across focus group and questionnaire results. Adaptability was described as the norm for future work and career advancement and critical thinking and problem solving were identified as the essential skills. Participants described a career context where individuals were leaving jobs because they foresaw changes occurring rapidly in a field, requiring adaptability in skills and mindset. There were few school solutions discussed that would lead to attainment of this school goal, merely statements about the relevance and importance to long-term success for today's students. One respondent elaborated on how schools might promote this disposition:

> We don't have to have all the answers, but we have to teach kids how to think and work to find solutions. There are jobs, problems, and positions that have not presented themselves to the world yet, but we need to be sure our kids are prepared to tackle those when they do hit our world. Therefore, we need to teach

kids skills that are transferable and multi-dimensional [Participant in focus group on October 10, 2016].

Academic skills.

Results showed that short and long-term student learning outcomes were important to participants. Responses ranged from preparation for post-secondary education to becoming a lifelong learner to being able to provide for oneself financially and live a productive life. Within this sub-theme the most frequent student goal was to prepare students for post-secondary education. Participants noted that not all students were college bound and students who were not college bound needed to feel valued in their contribution to society and have the skills to succeed in a career out of high school. Participants described that problem solving and contributing to society over a longer period was going to require new skillsets and an ability to acquire new learning.

Problem-based learning experiences connected to broader society and community were favored by participants as a pedagogy to achieve individual goals. Notable examples included work experience, mentorships, apprenticeships, and service learning with community organizations, government entities, and businesses. Participants described authentic, real world application of skills in beginning to end projects as more transferable and applicable to later careers. Those experiences were described as favorable learning experiences for students while in school. One participant described the benefit of these learning opportunities in this way:

> To be able to make a connection as to how teaching and lessons in school are part of the real world. What does our community offer that they can extend to schools and students to make learning relevant? Not only experts in the

> community, but [also] how solving a problem in a school setting is transferable in the real world. Showing students the impact their ideas can have. Helping students to promote their learning beyond the classroom [Participant in focus group on October 17, 2016].

Individual student goals were the most frequent, intense, and extensively discussed themes produced by schools. Participant contributions reflected the complexity and depth needed to educate students, so they can meet the challenges facing them in post-secondary endeavors and meaningfully contribute to society.

In summary, results of this study show that citizens desire schools that pursue comprehensive goals for their students, communities, and for broader society. Citizens want schools that positively impact individuals and their communities and emphasize a whole-child approach. Participants described congruence in short and long-term goals with examples like positive character traits leading to an individual being a contributing, self-sufficient member of the community later in life. Communities and schools have a symbiotic relationship where shared values impact purpose and goals and developing generational success and sustaining the communities are both pursued for the betterment of society.

Participant descriptors of comprehensive school goals aligned well with the Mitchell and Mitchell (2003) characterization of education as both a public and private good. Educational benefits were described within the domains of private and public goods depending upon the goals and who specifically derives those benefits. In describing the desired outcomes for their schools and for education in general, participants articulated a range of outcomes that span public and private goods. Those

responses clustered around descriptions of goals through the lens of society, community, and individual students. Citizens described the comprehensive nature of school goals and educational outcomes across the range of technical and cultural aims described by Mitchell and Mitchell (Table 4).

Table 4

Citizen perspectives about education as a public and private good (Mitchell & Mitchell, 2003)
Results of participant perspectives about school goals by technical and cultural aims

	What Aims for Education?	
Who Benefits?	Education as Technical: Training in Skills of Practical Value Having Economic Value	Education as Cultural: Awakening of Identity and Character Having Political Value
A private good: Distributed results accruing to individuals as education is being obtained	**Durable product:** ***Individual:*** *Character traits, Application of critical thinking adaptability, and problem solving, Preparation for future learning*	**Direct service:** ***Community:*** *Connectedness, Service*
A public good: Cumulative benefits for everyone; expected to accrue interest over time	**Human capital investment:** ***Societal:*** *Engaged and productive citizens* ***Community:*** *Sustainable future, Stewardship*	**Cultural legacy:** ***Societal:*** *Betterment of society, Equity* ***Community:*** *Pride*

Source: Adapted from Mitchell and Mitchell (2003)

Table 4 illustrates how specific descriptors of societal, community, and individual student goals fit the aims of education falling both within the realm of technical and cultural outputs. Societal goals were most congruent with education as a public good including the goals of a productive citizenry to the betterment of society. Notably, citizen prioritization of equity in opportunity and outcomes, described in terms like the achievement gap, was not a key finding.

This missing reflection about equity was the most substantial non-finding of this study, given the large and widely discussed achievement gaps in the state of Minnesota. Participants did not describe education with Horace Mann's perspective about public schools being the "the great equalizer of the conditions of men" (Duncan, 2019). It is possible that questions were not specific enough to elicit responses about opportunity and achievement gaps. Yet, questions about goals, priorities, and underlying values of schools also did not elicit consistent responses about equity being an underlying value or goal of schools. The previously discussed risks of the sampling process promoting bias and a dominant narrative may have also contributed to this non-finding. This will be described further in chapter 5 with suggestions about future research with a more diverse and representative sample of citizens.

Community goals spanned private goods and public goods, represented by descriptors ranging from cultural concepts such as connectedness to public goods like creating a sustainable future and schools being good stewards of community resources. Individual student goals align well with Mitchell and Mitchell's (2003) description of durable products, which have practical and economic value to students. Participants in this study described more expansive definitions of durable products that benefitted individual students including short-term skills and attributes to concepts like life-long learning and adaptability. Further discussion about the implications of this framework and for research and practice in general are described in chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Implications

The purpose of this study was to explore citizen perspectives about the conferred values between schools and communities and the school goals desired by participants. This study employed a focus group methodology to explore and generate descriptions from Minnesota citizens who were identified as information-rich sources because of their participation in local school district curriculum advisory councils. Questions elicited responses designed to answer two research questions: 1) What do Minnesota citizens identify as the conferred values between schools and communities? 2) What goals do Minnesota citizens desire of their schools? This chapter will provide a brief background of the purpose and challenges of this study, review the key findings, describe the implications for research and practice, and conclude with suggestions for future research.

This study contributed to the literature on educational policy and practice in three substantial ways. First, citizen perspectives provided additional data that contributes to understanding of school goals and should be considered in school finance and accountability research. Second, this study affirmed the framework ascribed to Rothstein, Jacobson, and Wilder (2008) about eight broad educational goals that spanned history. This study also expanded Rothstein, Jacobson, and Wilder's framework to include school goals that benefit communities and society aligned with values. Finally, this study supported the claims of Mitchell and Mitchell's (2003) framework characterizing education as a multi-faceted good. Consideration in educational policy and research in school finance and accountability should follow.

Purpose and challenges

This study sought to explore what Minnesota citizens want from their schools because the literature review posed questions about whether current educational policy was reflective of comprehensive school goals. Past definitions of the purpose of education serving multiple ends and seeking comprehensive goals, as described by Mitchell and Mitchell (2003) and Rothstein, Jacobson, and Wilder, (2008), were often not congruent with current educational policy. This was particularly the case for educational policy in the areas of school finance and accountability. Narrowing school goals to technical outcomes attained by individual students was the norm in research and practice. A primary purpose of this study was to develop a deeper understanding of the school and community values underlying school goals. The qualitative methodology was designed to explore how community and school values contributed to what citizens want from their schools. This study sought to expand current understanding of school goals through this methodology and examine the connection to community and school values.

In the context of educational policy going back to "A Nation at Risk," federal and state educational policy have reinforced narrow perspectives about school goals. Those goals have focused educational analyses and processes on narrow, technical outputs accrued by individual students. This contrasts with more comprehensive definitions of school purposes that are aligned with historical definitions and local citizen perspectives. Schools in the United States and Minnesota historically have sought comprehensive goals. This study extends that understanding to preferences regarding school goals reflecting the values of communities and their citizens. Those

values represented perceptions that schooling is both a public and private good, addressing technical and cultural outputs, serving varied purposes within and across communities. The current educational policy context inhibits local citizen perspectives and the pursuit of comprehensive goals aligned with community values.

This study also intended to explore how a citizen driven process exploring values and school goals may illustrate different outcomes from current educational policy. This was important because of the omission of citizens from the inner circle of policy-making and the proliferation of policy alternatives developed without their input. In contrast to substantive educational policy, including the federal No Child Left Behind and Minnesota's World's Best Workforce Statute, when citizens are asked about school goals more comprehensive definitions arise. As described in chapter 2, this study utilized a citizen-oriented focus group methodology because of its potential to connect goals, processes, and resources to community values. This study sought to explore this further and to demonstrate how rich, descriptive evidence of values and goals may contribute to policy and practice.

Engaging citizens at the local level and empowering them to define school goals based on community values has limitations. Coherent state policy that leverages shared resources in an efficient and effective manner may not arise from a patchwork of local citizen perspectives about educational goals. When leadership is lacking in important areas of need, citizens may reinforce problems of the past and implicit bias present in community values. State and Federal policy-makers have a stake and a financial commitment to schools that may create tension with communities that are not meeting standards for all students. Balance must be sought in how community values and school

goals are shaped with consideration of broader policy initiatives and state and national interests.

A specific example of the limitations of citizen engagement is the lack of attention to equity and the achievement gap in these citizen focus groups. It is notable that, comparable to the MASA (2014) Minnevate! World Café sessions, participants in this study did not describe a strong emphasis on equity as a school goal. The World Café process involved less structured feedback sessions facilitated by group members who cycled through groups to disperse dialogue and ideas. Equity and the achievement gap were mentioned in individual responses to questions about school priorities but were not a substantive focus of conversation in any group. It seems implausible that Minnesota could pursue values like citizenship and democracy, while poor and ethnic minority students continue to struggle with large achievement and opportunity gaps. As Minnesota continues to grapple with how to ameliorate the achievement and opportunity gap, this response pattern from citizen and school leaders should be explored further.

Study limitations were also evident due to challenges securing focus group participants and in generalizability of the focus group process as a general concern of this research methodology. The relatively limited participation rates and the need to collect additional data through a questionnaire process should be noted in drawing inferences from this study. Standardized focus group questions and procedures and consistent, multi-step analysis processes were used to mitigate sampling issues and identify salient themes across participants and groups. Questions were derived from the oral preliminary exam in alignment with the perspective of the researcher's doctoral

committee members. Those questions and this research design elicited salient themes with implications for educational scholars, leaders and practitioners. The following key findings represent those themes, followed by implications for research and practice in the areas of goal setting, accountability, and educational adequacy.

Key Findings

Minnesota Citizens participating in this study wanted students to be well-rounded and their schools to pursue comprehensive and varied student goals. Those goals clustered around themes reinforcing school goals emphasizing benefits at the individual student, local community, and societal level. Results of this study suggest that conferred values between schools and communities are strong and they are connected to perspectives about school purpose and goals. Those goals transcend the technical, student-oriented goals reinforced in prominent state and federal educational policies. The following sections highlight key findings from this study and introduce connections to the literature review from chapter 2, which will be explored further in the implications section of this chapter.

Conferred values between schools and communities.

Conferred values identified in this study contributed to the research validating education as a good that addresses broad goals aligned with community values. Citizen participants in this study shared Mitchell and Mitchell's (2003) perspective on education being both a public and private good. The interdependence of education being a public and private good was pronounced, particularly in smaller communities. In those communities, conveying cultural legacy, human capital development, and individual success were viewed as keys to the future *existence* of the community. Community

values and educational goals were congruent and represent how education is both a public and private good meeting current needs and providing a mechanism for a sustainable future.

Another way that goals were described by participants is through the lens of short and long-term public and private goods and outcome measurements. Examples of short-term benefits include schools providing direct service to children and economic opportunities for adults. Long-term community benefits include conveying cultural legacy and human capital investment. Viewing public education as a method to sustain diverse communities across the state of Minnesota presents a different resource allocation and policy-development challenge than standards-based accountability.

Citizens in this study described school goals that transcended individual students, based on school and community values driving pursuit of comprehensive outcomes. Those comprehensive goals extended beyond Rothstein, Jacobson, and Wilder's (2006) descriptions of historically validated school goals because of their inclusion of concepts beyond those benefitting individual students. Societal and community goals were identified as integral school purposes and mutual goals such as community connectedness and sustainability were noted. The importance of conferred values was evident in these descriptions including community values such as pride, citizenship, stewardship, equity, and the legacy of bettering society by educating the next generation. These societal and community goals are evident in school functions such as athletics and arts activities, community education, and service learning. The following reflections elaborate on the concepts of societal, local community, and individual goals that were also key findings of this study.

Societal goals.

Societal goals were described in each focus group and in questionnaire responses. A noted purpose of public education was to produce engaged and productive citizens for the betterment of society. The promotion of democratic values through mass education is a hallmark principle underlying the creation of state constitutional principles guaranteeing an adequate education (Satz, 2007). The fundamental purpose was that all community members can participate in societal institutions like representation in our government, voting and civic engagement, and basic economic opportunities. These are the values mooring America's democratic and economic foundation. Participants recognized this purpose at the societal level.

Human capacity development is difficult to measure, and it is even more difficult to discern how resources have an impact on outcomes. Respondents described the concept of public education and the foundational resources needed to promote democratic schools and outcomes for students as an end itself. There are additional economic benefits that coincide with the democratic, citizenship-oriented goals described by participants.

Respondents typically noted that in the long-term, society benefits from an educated populace, particularly in a knowledge-based economy. In the short-term, public schools are critical employers and economic facilitators in communities. Schools provide care for students, so adults can work and professional opportunities for teachers and other school personnel. Participants recognized that reinforcing these outcomes benefitted individuals, but also the societal imperative to develop character and citizenship traits in future workers and citizens.

Community goals.

Shared values and outcomes between local communities and their schools were a prominent theme of this study. Community pride in schools and connectedness through service and relationships were salient themes across all regions and participants. Service, connectedness, sustainable futures, and pride were all concepts described by participants as examples of how communities and schools think about shared purpose. These values were much more localized than societal values emphasizing democracy or citizenship, and they were described in much more tangible ways.

Student experiences with service learning, adults mentoring students, community service, and school to work programs were all concrete examples of how community values were promoted by local schools. Service learning, for example, benefitted the recipients and the participants immediately, create a sense of stewardship in communities, and facilitated pride and trust. Respondents described resources in ways that were less about financial resources and more about the capacity of communities. Citizen values that prioritized community sustainability and future-orientation were prominent across focus groups. Policy currently prioritizes goals and resource allocation evaluated in the current context, when participants in this study suggested greater focus on future benefits.

Specifically, participants described how communities support their schools and create future citizens who would sustain productive relationships. Goals and outcomes were aligned with productive dispositions and social-emotional skills versus academic knowledge or skills. Participants valued students who contributed to their communities

through civic engagement and service more than their academic or economic contributions. An important outcome for participants was sustaining community values where human capital investment kept local communities vibrant and relevant.

Individual goals.

Identified student goals were diverse and inclusive of skills ranging from content learning, character traits, and social-emotional skills to long-term ability to learn and sustain a productive lifestyle. Participants clearly valued well-rounded students and themes suggesting that productive attributes and dispositions like character, adaptability, and critical thinking were more important than knowledge and skills. Even technology skills, which were noted as one of the most substantial changes since the participants were in high school, were not described as a priority as frequently or as saliently. It may be that participants assumed that students were also mastering core content and developing knowledge and skills in academic disciplines.

In addition to considering goals that schools confer to graduates leaving the K-12 educational system, participants noted long-term individual goals. Thinking about the long-term goals of self-sustenance or being connected to a community impacts thinking about values and goals for students in our public schools. Being a contributing, participatory member of a community extends beyond an economic benefit gained through occupational success. Community connectedness and democratic values like fraternity, charity, and citizenship span individuals across the economic spectrum. The individual goal of self-sustainability was described by participants as being driven by dispositions as much as knowledge, skill, or educational attainment. Clearly, obtaining post-secondary education is critically important, but developing individuals who are

adaptive, hard-working, and lifelong learners was also seen by participants as an essential path to future success.

In summary, citizen participants in this study desired schools that produced comprehensive goals for individual students, their local communities, and society. Study participants described comprehensive goals that reflected deeply held community values including community sustainability, promoting future generational success, community connectedness, citizenship, service, and pride. Participants described the disjunction between educational policy that narrows school goals and citizen perspectives about values and preferred comprehensive school goals. Including citizens in the process of identifying priority goals may result in educational policy that prioritizes and measures outcomes that span cultural and technical goods.

Implications

Implications for research.

Two primary frameworks guided the theoretical foundation for this study. Rothstein, Jacobson, and Wilder (2006) described eight broad categories of school outcomes that have historically defined American education: (1) basic academic knowledge and skills, (2) critical thinking, (3) appreciation of the arts and literature, (4) preparation for skilled employment, (5) social skills and work ethic, (6) citizenship, (7) physical health, and (8) emotional health. The second primary framework was Mitchell and Mitchell's (2003) description of education being both a public and private good. This study contributed to these frameworks and extended understanding of this research through this citizen-oriented process. The following sections describe how this study contributed and extended understanding related to these frameworks and school goals.

The Rothstein, Jacobson, and Wilder (2008) framework described school goals that spanned eras of American history. This study supports the broad nature of individual student goals citizens expect from schools. Participants identified individual student goals ranging from academic skills, to character traits, to productive dispositions like grit and growth mindset, to adaptability and capacity for lifelong learning. Individual student goals were reflected by every participant. Unlike policy emphasizing purely academic outcomes, participants described an array of social-emotional, personal, and academic skills that schools should confer to their students. Like questionnaire respondents in the Rothstein, Jacobson, and Wilder study, participant responses reflected a balanced perspective about the importance of these individual outcomes for students.

This study extended research on school goals by identifying outcomes that were attributed to communities and broader society in alignment with underlying values. Rothstein, Jacobson, and Wilder (2008), analyzed historical evidence and surveyed various stakeholders about school goals and priorities for student outcomes. The researchers described goals and accountability processes, such as professional accreditation, that support broadening school goals beyond standards-based accountability measured by tests. This study supports that recommendation and extends thinking about development of school goals to citizen-oriented processes that define local preferences in alignment with community values. Findings of this study suggest that broad categories defined by citizens across Minnesota are relatively aligned with comprehensive views of education meeting individual student, local community, and societal goals. Giving communities autonomy in developing goals in those categories

aligns with Firestone's (1989) perspective that "if one tried to take advantage of the messiness of the educational policy system rather than cleaning it up, constructive, creative approaches might be developed locally" (p. 23).

Another way to think about the comprehensive nature of school goals is to consider the framework of public and private goods described by Mitchell and Mitchell (2003). Results of this study demonstrated citizen preferences for school goals that span education as a public and private good. Participants described technical goals benefitting individual students, cultural goals benefitting society, and community goals that were described as both private and public goods. This study reinforced Mitchell and Mitchell's definition by providing tangible examples and benefits of how schools represent a public and private good and how those ends interact with community values.

This study supports the Mitchell and Mitchell (2003) framework characterizing education as a multi-faceted good. Themes included skill-based outcomes benefitting individuals, including durable knowledge, and societal and community-oriented aims such as holistic human capacity development. Participants perceived that schools provide public goods, such as passing on values like citizenship, benefitting both communities and society at large. Participant descriptions expanded upon the definitions of education being both a public and private good by providing specific examples of how education serves local communities and broader society. Descriptions of cultural goods transcended concepts of providing jobs and childcare to include how schools bring individual and community pride and opportunities for connectedness. Technical goods attained by individuals and by the public were also expanded to

include the broad array of skills needed to be successful in current educational experiences and in life.

Participant descriptions about school goals spanned benefits to society, community, and individual students in a complex and integrated manner. Applying the Mitchell and Mitchell (2003) framework, participants described education as both a public and private good seeking technical and cultural aims for students, within communities, and for the benefit of broader societal ends like citizenship.

Implications for educational policy and practice.

Findings of this study are incongruent with the content and enactment of educational policy seeking to narrow school goals to technical goods for individual students. Examples include Minnesota's World's Best Workforce statute and the federal Every Student Succeeds Act that primarily define success through short-term, standardized achievement test results (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018; Minnesota Department of Education, 2017). The challenges faced by policy-makers to respond to the varied school goals from this study were also noteworthy. Findings from this study suggested little consensus across participants about priorities for individual student goals.

Societal and community goals are about generational success and a commitment to long-term sustainability for individuals and the community itself. The Every Child Succeeds Act and the World's Best Workforce Statute prescribe outcomes and measurement systems that are the same for every school in the state of Minnesota. These policies mandate certain educative processes that are almost exclusively focused

on the individual student level, and outcomes measured by narrowly defined standardized tests in mathematics, reading and science.

Individual student goals should consider a broad array of skills and dispositions students need for educational and life success. Student implications include dual emphasis on short-term academic and technical and social-emotional attributes. They may include long-term development of dispositions like growth mindset, social-emotional skills, the ability to form and sustain relationships, and a commitment to lifelong learning. These may be emphases in many schools in Minnesota already, but the way we fund and hold schools accountable for results tends to be more academic and short term in nature. Tangible short-term activities and processes promoting societal and community values like citizenship and service are found in Minnesota schools. Schools are not recognized or provided incentives to produce graduates that have the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and priorities to make their community and broader society a better place.

An additional implication lies in educational processes and how they contribute or inhibit attainment of state and local purposes and goals. Regulatory educational policy in the context of complex work like educating students does not support the adaptive needs of schools and teachers. The state's World's Best Workforce plan falls in this realm of regulatory, one size fits all state policy, requiring specific statewide outcomes and processes that are aligned with the statute. Other recent state mandates also are in this realm; that is, they are regulatory mechanisms that come with little or no state resources, but substantial process expectations. Examples include 240-page procedures manuals for state testing, creation of a statewide course catalogue, and

reporting requirements that are redundant and inconsequential. Minnesota needs statewide incentives for doing effective work that recognize the complexity of teaching and learning by promoting local adaptation and processes.

A strong example of a statewide policy that works and is aligned with these principles is the Quality Compensation (Q-comp) program. The program is optional and participating districts are required to develop plans in teacher evaluation, professional growth, teacher leadership, job-embedded professional development, and goal setting. The Minnesota Department of Education provides parameters and technical support but does not dictate program details or student outcomes. Those are developed at the local level, resulting in an array of unique and locally relevant practices that support teacher professional growth and student goals. Q-comp has been shown to positively affect teacher and student outcomes, and effects on student achievement are strongest when professional pay is aligned with practices that promote teacher reflection and growth (Sojourner, Mykerezi, & West, 2014).

Technology was described as a potential hindrance to development of authentic human relationships and community. If technology served as a facilitator of economic opportunity, particularly in smaller communities, sustainability through service and connectedness could distinguish those communities as destinations of the future. The implications for schools might be substantially different if their primary purpose was to promote and sustain values such as civic engagement. Technology could facilitate technical skill development. In the context of community values, state education policy would need to accept wider variance in academic content and process standards. It is plausible that making stronger connections to community values could make policy

enactment, attainment of desired outcomes, and resource utilization more effective and efficient.

This study showed that the responding citizens desire school goals that are aligned with community values. When one considers the definition of the term "values" many connotations come to mind. Fowler (2004) described values in the context of political culture, the core ideas that guide how individuals and groups of individuals make decisions. It is the role of local leadership to translate citizen perspective into operational principles. Goals, resource allocation, and measures of success should emanate from those values. In contrast, current policy-making and resource allocation models overemphasize technical outputs, efficiency, regulatory policy mechanisms, and standards-based accountability in mathematics and reading. The state of Minnesota should collect additional evidence about the conferred values between schools and communities and the goals of our public schools. This is a poignant need because of Minnesota's history investing in education and human capital as a core distinctive competency (Minnesota Historical Society, 2007; Time Magazine, 1973).

This paper sought the perspectives of Minnesota citizens because the researcher believed community values were absent from policies guiding school goals. This model deviates from efficacious citizen involvement. There is a need to enact more effective models to promote citizen perspectives about values and resources, efficient and effective organizational performance, and local control. Effective processes serve the school's goals and community values; they are built on the foundation of strong, engaged communities. Minnesota has distinguished itself as a state where strong communities with effective governmental institutions have been the norm. If an

engaged citizenry is a key to the future, local leaders must create authentic opportunities for citizens to engage in decisions, provide feedback, and partner with schools.

Measures of success must be developed that encourage schools to emphasize comprehensive goals. Processes that include student perspectives, process outcomes including professional practices, and social-emotional and personal measures of self-efficacy should be considered. In contrast, current accountability models reinforce narrow definitions of success based upon standardized reading, mathematics, and science tests. Shifting to a more balanced set of accountability measures is more aligned with perspectives in this study. A more comprehensive view of school goals may ameliorate identified challenges in the current standards-based accountability models.

Those accountability models should reinforce skills and dispositions necessary for future individual, community, and societal success. Beyond Minnesota, Thomas Friedman (2017) described the biggest challenge of our current political context as the future being now. Three "climate" changes are accelerating the future in the areas of climate, technology, and globalization. The world is becoming smaller, more interdependent, and technology oriented. Communities have an opportunity to play a larger role in providing human connections through democratic principles like fraternity and interdependence. These relationships are the foundation for effective public institutions where community and school values are congruent and connected

Democratic and economic values that span communities and society can co-exist if we are willing to design incentives and accountability models that allow for both. It is clear to the researcher that if we continue to stress technical outcomes, the concept of community-based public schools may be in jeopardy. This eliminates a key mechanism

for some Minnesota communities to sustain important values and the core source of community economic, social, and civic life. We need to look for opportunities to find common ground and mutual benefit for our children. Policy-makers and leadership should support our schools in carrying out critical community and societal purposes like serving others, modeling citizenship, and building relationships. If Minnesotans agree upon the necessity of public education to serve a public and private good across diverse communities, those communities need flexibility and resources to sustain efforts. Given results of this study and the lack of attention to equity, they must also be held accountable to high levels of achievement and opportunity for all students.

Historical definitions of school goals suggest acceptance of broad public value provided by our schools. Standards-based accountability models have shifted the emphasis to narrowly defined outcomes, with incremental changes occurring in recent state and federal policy. In terms of student outcomes, the time has come for re-emphasis on the whole child. Educational policy and leadership should promote resources, incentives, and outcome indicators that encourage whole child development. Study participants identified a broad array of important student outcomes. Those included social-emotional learning, character development, well-rounded academic content knowledge and skills, citizenship, preparation for future learning, critical thinking and adaptability, and having a service orientation.

Resources have become scarcer and high stakes accountability has focused schools on narrowly defined reading and mathematics outcomes. It is challenging for schools to sustain programs that promote well-rounded student attributes. Examples include time and resources for service and social-emotional learning, civics and life

skills experiences, and course offerings in science, social studies, humanities, and the arts. Beyond the societal and community importance of these experiences, post-secondary school and workforce expectations are changing. Becoming a well-rounded, resilient, adaptive, and resourceful person may be more important to long-term success than immediate attainment of technical skills. Schools should be preparing students for this reality.

Future Research

Expansion of this study.

This study was limited by sampling challenges and lack of representation from all regions across the state of Minnesota. Additionally, participant characteristics were important to the study design and research questions, but sampling school district curriculum advisory council members may have limited the diversity and transferability of perspectives. The researcher wonders why equity and diversity were not described as prominent school goals when Minnesota's well-documented and communicated achievement gaps are so evident. It is plausible that a dominant narrative was advanced by citizens who are part of the inner circle of influence in their school district and that a more diverse citizenry would have yielded alternative goals.

This study could be replicated with a random, representative sample of citizen participants that would better reflect the diversity of perspectives and backgrounds in the state. An alternative approach would be strategic sampling with underrepresented groups including citizens from ethnic minority backgrounds. A comparative analysis could follow either within the additional focus groups. Defining "community" in different ways may bring additional insight into these findings and potentially

contribute to or contradict this study. The principles undergirding this study and the results would remain, including connections between community values and goals.

The focus group questions were developed by the researcher and doctoral committee members in follow-up to the preliminary oral exam. The theoretical foundation of comprehensive versus narrow school goals and engaging citizens around school purpose and goals was already established. This may have biased the questions, the facilitation process, and the analysis. Revisiting research questions about goals and conferred values with broader, more open-ended questions may yield different results. Asking citizens to weigh in more generally on what influences school goals would be valuable in affirming the importance of community and school values and their connection to goal development.

Educational adequacy.

This paper contributes to scholarship in educational adequacy by illustrating the complex interactions between how we define adequate outcomes and whether states are allocating sufficient resources to achieve those ends (Alexander, 2004). While this paper was not focused on whether Minnesota schools are adequately funded, it did support understanding about what outcomes citizens want from that funding. This is where discussions of resource adequacy should start. One should not assume that an adequate funding floor exists based on current definitions and processes used to determine if Minnesota is adequately funding schools. Participants in this study wanted more for their schools and the imperative may be greater than ever. An implication of this study is a more citizen inclusive model for determining adequacy rather than

making assumptions about state policy or professionals articulating goals across diverse school communities.

An adequacy model aligned with citizen perspectives from this study would: involve local citizens and leadership, consider local political values, be inclusive of broader system outputs, and blend models to determine costs. The Minnesota constitution specifies the state must adequately fund a "uniform, thorough, and efficient" system of public schools (Minn. Const. art. XIII, sec. 1). A "thorough" system of public schools should reflect the full range of individual, community, and societal outputs expected by citizens. Adequacy studies should account for that range of outputs when considering the educative process and necessary resources. Citizen and local educational leaders are well positioned to articulate the varied purposes and values of local schools and should be included in the analysis through local panels. Analysis of educational adequacy should include those outputs and a mechanism to measure success in those comprehensive school purposes and goals.

Past treatment of system outcomes in the econometric models has not accounted for the comprehensive expectations of schools or local values and preferences. Critics of existing approaches have noted those models omit elements that are both required and/or desired by local schools. Examples range from required standards outside of mathematics and language arts, coursework in vocational education, arts, music, science, and social studies, and basic costs such as safety and extra-curricular activities. Participants in this study perceived many of these same omissions, noting additional goals aligned with community values such as service and community engagement that require time and financial resources.

Engaging citizens and local leaders in ongoing dialogue about values, purpose, and goals could add transparency and depth to existing adequacy models. Those elements should align with adequacy definitions that assure all students and communities have adequate resources to address their identified outputs. An inherent risk in engaging local citizens and leaders in the definition of adequate outputs are that students may be deleteriously affected by lower or differing standards across communities. The paradox of uniformity and local definitions of educational adequacy may be resolved by accepting the idea that certain elements of the educative process would be established at the state level and others uniformly defined at the local level.

Educational goals.

This study affirmed research supporting a desire for more comprehensive school goals. Further studies examining efficacy in areas like social-emotional learning and productive dispositions would help policy-makers and educators to change the narrative about effective outcomes. This study did not include in-depth exploration of the school efficacy research, but the researcher is aware of the isolated way we measure holistic school outcomes. This leads to a more limited role in shaping policy and further narrowing of outcomes to standardized testing in reading, mathematics, and science. Identifying valid and reliable measures of social-emotional learning and character also would serve to broaden analysis of the resources necessary to educate individual students to high level, comprehensive outcomes.

Further research is also necessary to evaluate how goal-setting autonomy and agency can have an impact on educational policy enactment and outcomes. Comparing schools that have relative autonomy in goal setting and the educational process to those

pursing goals defined more prescriptively at the state and federal level would be useful. Chapter 2 highlighted studies from other sectors showing improved effectiveness and efficiency when goals are developed by critical stakeholders, including citizens. This approach would mirror adequacy studies but would emphasize a return on investment analysis with autonomy and congruence between school goals and stakeholder preference as the key independent variable.

One of the most important concepts described by citizen participants in this study was to take a more future-oriented perspective on individual, community, and societal goals. The current political environment seems to favor short-term, simple solutions and measurement processes. Policy-makers are challenged to agree on scalable, systemic solutions to address the challenges and opportunities in our educational system. Local citizens have the right frame and incentives to align community values with the educational goals and processes in their community. Focusing on long-term outcomes like generational success, engaging in life-long learning, connectedness to a community, and being a productive citizen would create incentives for schools to emphasize comprehensive goals in their measures of success.

At the inception of this paper, the researcher posed a theory about the challenges education and other public institutions face as public trust and confidence wanes. Educational policy, goals, and processes that contradicted what citizens wanted from their schools contributes to that mistrust. Schools and school leaders will continue to be challenged in the coming years, particularly as Minnesota and the nation face uncertain economic and social changes. Forces such as segmented marketing shaping our consciousness, authoritarian leaders separating us to gain political advantage, and

technology overwhelming our human connections are leading to more discord and less consensus around the public good. What is more important than re-engaging around the societal, community, and individual values that bind us together and will sustain humankind moving forward? Assuredly, there is nothing more important than the public and private goods pursued by our public schools, our most-important community asset for a brighter future.

Epilogue

Reflecting on moving forward as a scholar-practitioner, I recognize that change happens when we coalesce with other leaders and organizations around a common set of values and goals. This paper offered me an opportunity to bridge organizational efforts across the University of Minnesota and the Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA). The support and endorsement of this work by MASA was integral to making connections to citizens and to the focus group process. Scholarship is critical to the development of leadership organizations like MASA and the Association of Metropolitan School Districts (AMSD), and I am grateful for my connections to those organizations. I am committed to pursuing leadership opportunities and efforts that bridge values and goals across scholar-practitioners, organizations, schools, universities, and policy-makers.

A crucial area reflecting Minnesota's values and goals is equity. This paper challenges educational leaders to consider our role in promoting or confronting a dominant narrative that does not advance human capacity development for all children. The lack of attention to equity and the achievement gap in these focus groups and the Minnevate! initiative warrants further attention. More recent initiatives such as Reimagine Minnesota, which is an ad hoc initiative lead by school district superintendents and AMSD, provide a promising framework for moving forward. This initiative has a collective plan, network and vision, goal, and outcome statements that are aligned with a human capacity development framework.

Formal leadership must follow at levels of local and state government and within the non-profit and informal leadership networks. This may be challenging if this

study's findings reflect lacking interest in equity as a priority for schools. I continue to believe that Minnesota citizens, leaders, and policy-makers care about the development and outcomes for all children and communities. We struggle to achieve consensus on the approach or necessary time and resources to do this work well. Advancing a framework that assures high expectations for generational human capacity development is supported by this study. That lens may help to minimize the false and divisive narratives around trade-offs between children and communities with diverse backgrounds and needs. I am committed to this effort.

I am confident this paper will support my goal to leave a personal and professional legacy as a scholar-practitioner. I hope it will challenge educational leaders to consider the perspectives of citizens and to seek comprehensive, ambitious goals for our children and our communities. If we are not able to develop consensus and commitment to future generations, we threaten the core of our democracy. We must respond to demographic changes, complex societal challenges, changing work expectations, and expanding globalism. Minnesota will fall short morally and economically if we do not commit to a future-orientation for our children and our communities. This lens is both challenging and exciting, and I look forward to pursuing my core value and our collective goal for a brighter future for all children.

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Appendices

Appendix A: E-mail communication with Mia Urick, Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA), Superintendents, and focus group participants.

Email to Mia Urick, Director of Professional Learning, MASA

Dear Mia,
I am writing about the focus group invitations that I would like to have superintendents send out to a Curriculum Advisory Council member in their school district. I would like each superintendent to identify an individual from their curriculum advisory council who has broad knowledge and perspective about school purpose and goals in their community. I have prepared a script for MASA to send out to superintendents that also notes how this work will contribute to the Minnevate! strategic goal. I would appreciate you sending this script to superintendents during first week of March 1st. I appreciate your support and look forward to the focus groups.

With appreciation,

Aaron

Email to Superintendents

Dear Superintendent,
I am writing to ask for your support identifying participants for regional focus groups about the public value schools provide to their communities and the state of Minnesota. These focus groups are part of my dissertation research and also will contribute to the MASA Minnevate process aspiring to build a bridge between a collective vision for the future and our current reality. I need your help identifying a member from your school district's curriculum advisory council who possesses broad knowledge and perspective about school purpose and goals.

I would appreciate you sending me the name and e-mail address of that person by March 30th. I will then send the following e-mail, using the blind carbon copy (bcc) field so that names and e-mail addresses of the potential participants are kept confidential. I appreciate your support and am happy to respond to any questions or feedback you have.

Sincerely,

Aaron Ruhland
Ph.D. candidate, University of Minnesota
Director of Learning and Accountability, Orono Public Schools

Email to Focus Group Participants

Dear Community Member,
You were identified by the school superintendent in your community as someone who has broad knowledge and perspective about school purpose and goals. I am writing to invite you to participate in a conversation about the public value that schools provide to your community. This focus group conversation is part of my dissertation research and also supports the work of the Minnesota Association of School Administrators to develop a shared vision for the future of Minnesota schools.

I will conduct these focus groups across the state of Minnesota, but the meeting in your area will take place on _____ at the _____. The group will take between 90 minutes to two hours and will involve collective responses to questions, discussion, and listening to others perspectives. This process allows for people to become engaged in a process through sharing, listening, discussion, review and presentation. In this process you will:

- *Share your thoughts and experiences,*
- *Listen to what others say,*
- *Discuss and describe priorities, and*
- *Provide feedback important to local and state school leadership and policy-makers.*

Your participation in this focus group is voluntary and your identity will remain anonymous in the reporting of results. You may respond simply respond to this e-mail verifying your willingness to participate. If you have any questions please feel free to ask via e-mail or phone, 612-919-6061.

Thank you for your consideration,

Aaron Ruhland
Ph.D. Candidate, University of Minnesota

Appendix B: Consent Form

Purpose, Politics, and Perspective:
Engaging citizens and parents for more effective and efficient schools

You are invited to be in a research study of school purpose and goals, how we define and measure success, and how we prioritize resources. You were selected as a possible participant by your school district Superintendent because you are a member of the local Curriculum Advisory Council. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Aaron Ruhland, Ph.D. candidate, University of Minnesota department of Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development.

Background Information

The purpose of this study is: To examine citizen perspectives about school purpose and goals, how we define and measure success, and how we prioritize resources.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

Participate in a focus group conversation with other Curriculum Advisory Members from other communities in your region. This focus group will be a one-time facilitated conversation that will last approximately 90 minutes.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study

The study has limited risks: First, participants will engage in a facilitated conversation with others and opinions may vary on issues discussed. You may experience significant disagreement with other participants; Second, although you will be the only participant from your community, you may be recognizable to other participants from neighboring communities. Third, during the course of the discussion, you may be asked by others about your experience or your children's experience with school that may not have been favorable in your past.

The benefits to participation are: You have the opportunity to provide important feedback to local and state educational leadership about the purpose and goals for schools, how we define and measure success, and how we prioritize resources.

Compensation:

You will receive a $25 honorarium for participating in this focus group as an offset to any expenses you occur with travel and as a token of appreciation from the researcher.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records. Study data will be encrypted according to current University policy for protection of confidentiality. The groups will be audio recorded for the purpose of analyzing results and those recordings will remain in the possession of the researcher. All reporting will be done anonymously, with no names associated with results including direct quotes.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of Minnesota or with your school district Superintendent. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is: Aaron Ruhland. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him at, 612-919-6061 or ruhl0016@umn.edu. Mr. Ruhland is advised by Dr. Nicola Alexander and she can be reached at 612-624-1507 or nalexand@umn.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you are encouraged to contact the Research Subjects' Advocate Line, D 528 Mayo, 420 Delaware St. Southeast, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; (612) 625-1650.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

[Include a header or footer with IRB study code #, pagination (x of y) and consent form version date.]

Appendix C: Focus group introduction and questions

Introduction

Here is a systematic process that gives citizens a chance to come together and discuss the value of schools to communities, important student outcomes, and priorities for the future.

It is important to have this conversation because:

- By listening we get insights about outcomes favored by others
- Schools can better meet the priorities of our communities
- Public policy improves when the public comes together and provides feedback to policy-makers.

Right now, people favor certain priorities over others but have limited opportunity to know how this might affect someone else. What do we want our schools to achieve and what knowledge, skills, and attributes do our students need for the future? Discussion, feedback, and coming together need to occur in a planned, systematic and respectful manner. Participants need to feel that the rules are fair, equitable, and consistent. This process allows people to become engaged in a process through sharing, listening, discussion, review and presentation. In this process you will:

- Share your thoughts and experiences;
- Listen to what others say;
- Discuss and describe priorities; and,
- Provide feedback important to local and state school leadership and policy-makers.

Question route (approximately 10-15 minutes per question)

1) Let's start by introducing ourselves. As we think about the future for our students and schools, we'd also like you to think back to your high school experience. Please introduce yourself and share one thing that you think has changed in society since you left high school.

2) What values does your community get from education?

3) What values does education get from your community?

4) What would you want students to be capable of when they graduate?

5) If you think about someone who went through your schools, what should they be prepared for at age 36?

6) What impact should schools have on students that would allow them to contribute to the community?

7) When you think about education, is it for the betterment of the person or the betterment of society?

8) Thinking back on what we discussed, what are your top three priorities for education in your community?

Appendix D: Codebook

Theme	Description	Sources	References
Goals	**Identification of how education and schools contribute to values and/or goals at the societal, school, and student level**		
Community Goals	**A statement recognizing the community values and/or goals of education.**		**51 Total**
Arts supporters and connections		1	1
Connectedness		4	11
Employer		1	1
Pride		3	4
Service and volunteering		4	16
Stewardship of financial and human resources		3	7
Sustainable future	Comments related to making an investment in students so they may return to benefit the community later or the value of the school district to the community and its future.	4	10

Theme	Description	Sources	References
Values reinforcing		1	1
Societal Goals	**A statement recognizing the societal values and/or goals of education.**		**26 Total**
Betterment of society		3	6
Engaged and productive citizens		4	9
Equity	Equity for all students, or equitable opportunities.	3	6
Global impact		2	5
Student Goals	**A statement recognizing the student level values and/or goals of education.**		**135 Total**
Academic skills	Foundational academic skills or specific mention of an academic content area.	2	6
Adaptability		4	12
Authentic learning experiences	This includes references to authentic learning and work-based learning programs and opportunities.	4	13
Character	Honesty, trustworthiness, empathy, respect, social-emotional	3	12

Theme	Description	Sources	References
	skills, kindness. and caring, relationships		
Citizenship		2	7
Collaboration skills		3	6
Communicate effectively	Through speaking and writing - not specific to a content area	2	8
Critical thinking and problem solving		4	18
Lifelong learning		4	12
Post-secondary preparation and success		4	11
Productive dispositions	Mindset, work-ethic, grit, resilience, drive	3	22
Self sufficiency		3	5
Technology literate		2	3
Question Summaries	**Descriptions to specific questions included in the goal analysis or in reference to specific questions**		

Theme	Description	Sources	References
Graduate preparation?	**At graduation and age 36 - questions 4 and 5**		**85 Total**
Academic skills	Fundamentals, varied content areas [not specific to communicating effectively speaking or writing]	1	3
Adaptable		3	8
Character	Honesty, trustworthiness, empathy, respect, social-emotional skills, kindness. and caring, relationships	3	7
Citizenship		1	2
Collaboration skills		2	3
College and career ready		3	5
Communicate effectively		2	6
Contribute to community and society		1	5
Critical thinking and problem solving	Creative problem solving	3	14
Individual goal attainment		1	4

Theme	Description	Sources	References
Lifelong learner		4	10
Productive dispositions	Mindset, work-ethic, grit, resilience, drive	3	11
Self-sufficiency		2	3
Technology literate		3	4
Top 3 priorities?			**51 Total**
Community - Connectedness		2	3
Community - Pride		1	1
Community - Service		1	1
Community - Stewardship of financial and human resources		1	2
Other		3	10
Society - Engaged and productive citizens		2	2

Theme	Description	Sources	References
Society - Global impact		1	2
Society- Equity		3	5
Student - Academic skills		2	3
Student - Adaptability		3	3
Student - Character		2	3
Student - Collaboration skills		1	1
Student - Communicate effectively		1	1
Student - Critical thinking		1	1
Student - Lifelong learning		2	3
Student - Post-secondary preparation and success		1	3

Theme	Description	Sources	References
Student - Productive dispositions		3	4
Student - Self sufficiency		3	3
Values?	**Questions 2 and 3 combined**		**69 Total**
Citizenship		2	3
College and career readiness		1	1
Connectedness	Relationships, partnerships, school-community connections	4	8
Conservativism		1	1
Economic growth		2	2
Education	Investing in children or next generation	4	6
Faith		1	1
Financial support		2	5
Globalism		2	2
Inclusiveness		1	1
Individualism		2	4

Theme	Description	Sources	References
Music		1	1
Pride		2	3
Service	Service learning, service, volunteerism	4	9
Whole child		1	1
What has changed since high school?		4	22